

**THE EXPERIENCE OF MENTORSHIP FOR THREE NOVICE TEACHERS
IN YUKON**

by

Orlanna Aubichon

B.Ed., University of Regina. 2002

PROJECT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF EDUCATION
IN
MULTIDISCIPLINARY LEADERSHIP

UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN BRITISH COLUMBIA

May 2014

© Orlanna Aubichon, 2014

Abstract

As demands on teachers have become more complex and early-career attrition rates have increased, there has been more emphasis on establishing formal mentorship programs for new teachers. In this study, the author explored mentorship, as experienced by three novice teachers in Whitehorse, Yukon. She compared these narratives, including her own anonymous story, to the mentorship programs described by local program planners or decision makers. Analysis revealed common feelings of anxiety and isolation among these new teachers. Findings may inform decision makers about the need to monitor the actual experience of new teachers when mentorship programs are reviewed and revised. Principals may be encouraged to interact with new teachers more frequently and experienced teachers may be inspired to offer support more freely. New teachers may be alerted to the need to enroll in optional mentorship programs or to build their own informal support networks.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	ii
Table of Contents	iii
Glossary	v
 CHAPTER 1: THE PROBLEM.....	 1
Overview of the Study	3
Purpose and Audience	3
Research Focus Questions	4
Personal Introduction and Leadership Contribution.....	5
Yukon Context.....	6
Significance of the Study.....	7
Preview of Findings.....	8
Chapter Summary.....	9
 CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	 10
Definition of Mentorship	11
The Needs of New Teachers.....	13
Classroom Performance.....	14
Emotional Needs.....	16
Relationship Needs	18
Needs as Expressed in Video Narratives	19
The Principal's Role	21
Learning Communities as Mentoring Cultures	24
Induction Program Examples	25
Common Characteristics of Effective Mentorship Programs.....	28
Chapter Summary.....	28
 CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY & RESEARCH PROCEDURES	 29
Rationale for Narrative Method.....	30
Effectiveness of Local Stories for Inspiring Change.....	30
Rapport with Co-participants.....	31
Narrative and Empowerment.....	32
Limitations of Narrative Method.....	32
Procedure	34
Finding Participants	34
Ethical Concerns.....	35
Data Analysis.....	36

Chapter Summary	36
CHAPTER 4: EXPERIENCES OF MENTORSHIP	38
Yukon Mentorship Program	38
New Teacher Narratives	43
Ella's Story	43
Joan's Story	47
Sally's Story	53
New Teachers' Needs	60
Classroom Performance	60
Emotional Needs	62
Relationship Needs	63
Support Through Mentoring	63
Formal Mentorship	64
Visitations	65
Support from the Principal	65
Informal Mentorship	66
Suggestions for Yukon Mentoring Programs	67
Suggestions to Improve Mentoring	67
Teacher Educators and New Teachers	68
Yukon Mentorship Program	68
Principals and Vice-Principals	70
Learning Communities	70
Suggestions for Further Research	70
Conclusion	71
 References	 72
Appendices:	
Appendix A Interview Questions	75
Appendix B Information Letter and Informed Consent	77

Glossary

Attrition: teacher attrition is a component of teacher turnover, which may include teachers exiting the profession as well as those who *migrate*, or change fields within education or change schools (Boe, Bobbit, & Cook, 1993; Croasmun, Hampton, & Hermann, 1997; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). In this study, the concern is with teacher attrition that occurs as a result of teachers leaving the profession within their first few years of teaching.

Burnout: any type of distress related to the performance of teaching duties that leads to reduced performance or feelings that one may be incompetent or unsuited for teaching.

Empowerment: an intentional, ongoing process centered in the local community, involving mutual respect, critical reflection, caring and group participation, through which people lacking an equal share of valued resources gain greater access to and control over those resources (Cornwall University Empowerment Group, as cited in Rappaport, 1995, p. 802). In this definition, the ability to tell one's own story is considered to be a powerful personal resource.

Formal mentorship: occurs when learning relationships are a strategic objective of the school organization. There are established goals and the relationship is maintained for a specific amount of time. Pairing between the mentor and mentee is done by the school organization.

Induction: a teacher induction program involves those practices used to help new and beginning teachers become competent and effective professionals in the classroom. Induction programs also help develop an understanding of the local school, community, and cultures (NWT Department of Education, Culture and Employment,

2008). Formal mentorship programs may be part of a more comprehensive induction program.

Induction period: Canadian researchers Karsenti and Collin (2013) describe the induction period as the first seven years of teaching. Their research supports the argument that teachers are more inclined to abandon the profession within this period.

Informal mentorship: occurs when a mentee self-selects a mentor with no expert training or support, such as a friend or a family member, or the mentee learns by working with more experienced colleagues without the support of a formal mentorship program. Informal mentorship has no specified goals and no timelines or restrictions. Less formal mentoring, such as meeting outside of the school day, having discussions, and planning the day together, have been found to contribute to a new teachers' desire to stay in the profession (Parker, Ndoeye, & Imig, 2009).

Mentorship: a learning relationship between a novice teacher and a seasoned teacher or principal, where the new teacher is supported and guided in the early years of his or her career (Parker, Ndoeye, & Imig, 2009; Tillman, 2005).

Novice: a new teacher with less than three years of teaching experience (Looney, 1997).

Teacher leadership: Danielson (2007) distinguished two types of teacher leadership: formal and informal.

Formal teacher leaders fill such roles as department chair, master teacher, or instructional coach. These individuals typically apply for their positions and are chosen through a selection process. Ideally, they also receive training for their new responsibilities....*Informal teacher leaders*, in contrast, emerge spontaneously and organically from the teacher ranks. Instead of being selected, they take the initiative to address a problem or institute a new program. They have no positional authority; their influence stems from the respect they command from their colleagues through their expertise and practice. (Qualities and Skills of Teacher Leaders, para. 1, 2)

CHAPTER 1: THE PROBLEM

Teachers play a crucial role in the lives of the students they teach and new teachers who do not yet possess the experience and knowledge of their more seasoned colleagues have an especially difficult task. In order for new teachers to one day develop into more experienced and effective teachers, they must remain in the profession. However, new teachers face difficulties and challenges they are often not prepared for and so the rate of attrition for early-career teachers is high and many more are at risk of “dropping out” (Bilash, 2011; Karsenti & Collin, 2013, p. 141).

In most professions, individuals are introduced to the job, then practice and perfect job skills over time, and then become experts. Teaching happens the opposite way, where the biggest challenges and obstacles often occur in the first year (Looney, 1997). Hall (1992) claimed the following:

Teachers are assigned a group of students, given the key to a classroom, introduced to their colleagues in a faculty meeting, and expected to teach. Teaching is one of the few professions in which the novice is expected to assume full responsibility from the first day on the job. (p. 53)

Recent professional and academic literature has affirmed that most new teachers would benefit from the support and guidance of seasoned professionals in the form of mentorship. For some new teachers, however, that support can be unavailable or ineffective. According to Cherian and Daniel (2008), educators are now realizing that unrealistic expectations placed on new teachers is increasing attrition, or teachers leaving the profession. Research has shown that mentorship as part of *teacher induction programs* (Cherian & Daniel, 2008; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003) is effective for retaining new teachers. Formal mentoring programs such as the one described by the Northwest Territories Department of Education, Culture, and Employment (2008) illustrate that knowledge of the importance of

mentoring programs has reached decision makers in northern schools and that plans have been implemented as programs. This study contributes a Yukon perspective to the existing literature about mentorship for new teachers.

The problem of teacher attrition in the United States – the alarming number of teachers who leave the profession within their first five years of teaching – has been well documented and may be as high as 50% (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Riggs, 2013). Teacher attrition is an international problem that has also been noted as a concern for teacher education programs in Australia (Joseph & Burney, 2011). There are few figures available for Canadian teachers but a study in Ontario (as cited in Bilash, 2011) noted that from 1993 to 1999, 20 – 30% of teachers withdrew from the Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan with less than three years of teaching.

As a result of a Canada-wide survey, Karsenti and Collin (2013) asserted that premature departure from the teaching profession is a costly “symptom of professional dysfunction” (p. 2) in terms of economics as well as teacher quality. Ingersoll and Smith (2003) argued that employee turnover may benefit organizations by eliminating low performers, preventing stagnation, and facilitating innovation. However, these authors also proposed that high turnover can be an indication that an organization has underlying problems and is not functioning well. When new teachers last only one to five years in the profession, the result is a lack of continuity for students and colleagues a reduction in the number of experienced teachers who are available to offer quality instruction. Consequently, the issue of new teacher attrition will impact how administrators deal with issues such as increased class size, retiring teachers, and increased multi-level classes.

New teachers often bring energy and innovation to a school but they are also likely to need more guidance and advice from colleagues and administrators (Karsenti & Collin,

2013). Ideally, education systems will benefit from new teachers' willingness to embrace change, such as in the area of technology, which can sometimes be a challenge for seasoned teachers. However, ideal systems will also provide mentors to help new teachers maintain enthusiasm as they manage their challenges, such as how to develop effective classroom management, how to keep up with preparation and marking, and how to find a balance between work and personal life.

Overview of the Study

To investigate the mentorship experiences of new teachers in Yukon, I interviewed two teachers with fewer than three years of teaching experience and I included myself as a third anonymous participant. My analysis of these three narratives explored new teacher mentorship in Yukon through the experiences of these participants. To better understand the context in which these narratives occurred, I also determined what formal mentorship programs are currently in place in Yukon by interviewing decision makers or program planners – two representatives from the Yukon Teachers' Association as well as one representative from the Yukon Department of Education. These responses and the stories of my teacher participants shed light on the formal or informal ways in which new teachers in Whitehorse may have received formal or informal mentorship in the early stages of their careers.

Purpose and Audience

The purpose of the study was to gain understanding of the actual experience of mentorship from the perspective of three new teachers in Yukon. I also compared their narratives, which included my own anonymous story, with descriptions of mentorship provided by *decision makers* – relevant personnel from the Yukon Teachers' Association (YTA) and the Yukon Department of Education. I hoped that these comparisons would shed

light on whether current programs had been experienced as successful or whether it could be beneficial to plan additional support for future new teachers.

The information presented in this study may be of interest to those considering how to support new teachers and maintain strong teacher retention rates in the Yukon Territory and elsewhere, particularly in northern Canadian communities. The study may also be useful to new teachers in these areas, to help them understand that their needs are not unique and that it is important to seek out mentorship themselves. Finally, the information from this study will inform other teachers, including me, as we move through our careers with greater sensitivity to the needs of those who join us as novice teachers.

Research Focus Questions

My central question for this narrative study was: *How do new teachers in Yukon (Whitehorse) describe their experiences of formal and informal mentorship?* Within this overall question, I prepared more specific questions to guide the narratives and to use as predetermined categories for analysis:

1. *What are the support needs of beginning teachers?*
2. *How has mentorship helped these teachers to overcome the challenges and demands of their first three years in the profession?*
3. *What changes to current mentorship programs would teacher participants suggest?*
4. *What do these stories tell us about the experience of new teacher mentorship in Yukon, as compared to mentorship programs described by decision makers from the Yukon Teachers' Association and Yukon Department of Education?*

Personal Introduction and Leadership Contribution

As someone who recently experienced firsthand the challenges and demands of being a new teacher in the Yukon Territory, I was interested in telling my own story and hearing the stories of other new teachers and their current experiences teaching in Yukon. As I experienced for myself, teaching can be stressful and overwhelming, especially in the beginning few years. I was interested in shedding light on both the struggles as well as the triumphs of new teachers, in order to learn how they can be better supported in their early careers to become successful teachers. I also wanted to understand how schools and districts might achieve strong teacher retention rates. My own experience made me curious about the experiences of others and gave me an interest in raising the issue for consideration and possible improvement or new direction.

For me, this study is an act of leadership and a unique contribution that I can share with my community. I define educational leadership as a willingness to embrace change and to explore new and innovative ways to solve problems, accomplish goals, and adapt to changing needs (Fullan, 2011). Educational leaders have clear visions and plans to move toward them. Two essential characteristics of leaders are that they can be trusted and can also motivate others to embrace change (Kaser & Halbert, 2009). I have tried to accomplish both with this study – I want readers to trust the personal voices of my teacher participants and also to trust that the suggestions I offer for consideration are supported by current academic and professional literature. I hope the teachers' stories, as compared to what decision makers have described as the mentoring that is available to new teachers in Yukon, will motivate teachers, administrators, and decision-makers to maintain interest in ensuring that mentorship is experienced positively by new teachers.

I believe that I am exhibiting *informal teacher leadership* in this study. Danielson (2007) identified two types of teacher leadership: formal and informal.

Formal teacher leaders fill such roles as department chair, master teacher, or instructional coach. These individuals typically apply for their positions and are chosen through a selection process. Ideally, they also receive training for their new responsibilities.....*Informal teacher leaders*, in contrast, emerge spontaneously and organically from the teacher ranks. Instead of being selected, they take the initiative to address a problem or institute a new program. They have no positional authority; their influence stems from the respect they command from their colleagues through their expertise and practice. (Qualities and Skills of Teacher Leaders, para. 1, 2)

The information that I have gathered and analyzed for this study is meant to contribute constructively to understandings of some recent, local experiences of new teachers from their personal perspectives. As a researcher and informal leader, I envision new teachers who have had positive mentorship experiences one day becoming mentors of other new teachers.

Yukon Context

As background for this study, it is important for the reader to understand the unique demographics that make up the 18 communities of the Yukon Territory. These communities range in population from 52 people in Destruction Bay, 2000 people in Dawson City to 27, 753 in the capital city of Whitehorse. The total population of the Yukon as of June 2012 is 35,862 with the majority of people residing in the capital city of Whitehorse (Yukon Health and Social Services and Yukon Bureau of Statistics, 2012). The median age is 39 and the population of the Yukon comprises 0.1% of the total Canadian population.

The Coordinator of Teacher Recruitment with Yukon Education shared the following statistics with me:

In 2013/2014 there were 54 new teacher hires in Yukon and in 2012/2013 there were 62. The average number of new teacher hires per year in Yukon averages 55 to 60 over the past three years. The total number of teachers in Yukon in 2013/2014 was 483 full-time equivalent teaching positions. In 2012/2013 there were 477 full-time equivalent teaching positions (not actual number of teachers). Urban and rural statistics on teacher hires are of interest in the research as well. In 2013/2014 the

urban new hires were equal to the rural new hires with 27 each. In 2012/2013 the urban new hires numbered 44 and the rural new hires numbered 18. (Personal Communication, October 9, 2013)

I had hoped to be able to find, as context for this study, data related to the cost of annual teacher recruitment to the territory. Unfortunately, these figures are not available. However, mentorship and retention were identified as important local issues by a member of the Yukon Teachers' Association.

Because of the distinctive nature of Yukon as a northern community, many of the teachers here have been educated in other provinces and are new to the Yukon education system as well as to the unique geographical and cultural aspects of Canada's north. New teachers in rural communities are potentially more isolated and may have even more adjustments to make to adapt to the local culture. As the major urban centre and territorial capital of Yukon, Whitehorse may be the community most likely to offer opportunities for mentorship to new teachers.

Significance of the Study

Although there is ample research on new teacher mentorship and the needs of new teachers, little or no research about new teacher mentorship in Yukon is available. Yukon is a unique context, especially for new teachers, and so this study provides important information for the Yukon education community and will contribute to the development or enhancement of mentorship programs in this and other rural or northern settings. Mentorship is my vision for the future as peer mentors are leaders who can influence other teachers, impact the lives of students, and improve the future of education. This study is an example of leadership because it is the first of its kind in Yukon and is relevant to local concerns such as teacher retention, teacher shortages, and teacher willingness to embrace educational change.

Preview of Findings

My interpretation of the narratives revealed some findings common among participants, consistent with themes that were evident in the literature review for this study. The teacher participants all spoke about experiencing intense feelings of self-doubt or insecurity during their first year. The new teachers described feelings of anxiety about not doing a good job, or not knowing enough about classroom management and therefore feeling overwhelmed in their daily challenges in the classroom. Feelings of isolation were prominent and the role of the principal was discussed as being very important. The new teachers expressed the need for more regular feedback and a desire for more interaction with their principals, either in the form of meetings or impromptu classroom visits.

If the personal experience of other new teachers are similar to the experiences of the three participants in this study, high levels of attrition are likely to continue. The literature speaks of mentorship as an effective means to retain new teachers (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003) and the teacher participants in this study also emphasized the importance of having someone to talk with, share ideas with, ask questions of, observe and learn from. If having positive mentorship experiences are necessary to the success and retention of new teachers then instituting effective mentorship programs for new teachers is a logical solution. However, interviews with decision makers about the mentorship opportunities that were available at the time the participants in this study began their Yukon teaching careers suggested that mentorship programs may not be experienced by beginning teachers as effectively as planners intended them to be. As a result of this study, I propose that attention to the literature about what kinds of mentorship programs are likely to be most effective, as well as ongoing local inquiry into the actual experiences of novice teachers, may be helpful for program review and revision.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter I have outlined the problem of new teacher attrition that has been identified across North America and in Canada and has not, to my knowledge, been explored for teachers in Yukon. I have proposed an approach to investigating the problem locally, by comparing the narratives of three novice teachers describing their experience of mentorship to information on mentoring programs from the perspective of decision makers from two relevant organizations: the Yukon Teachers' Association and the employer of Yukon teachers, the Yukon Department of Education. I have located myself in terms of my relationship to the problem I have identified, as a recent novice teacher, and to the solution that I have proposed, as a teacher leader conducting a study to contribute to local understanding of the problem and possible solutions. I identified an overall focus question for the study and also related questions that I used to guide the narratives and to analyze them. Finally, I previewed the findings for this study, which emphasized participants' descriptions of intense anxiety about whether they were doing a good job and concerns about classroom management. I noted that participants described feeling isolated and overwhelmed and wished for more support from and interaction with their principals.

Mentorship for new teachers is an area I have pursued in this study for my own professional learning and as a contribution to the education community of Yukon. By exploring my own experiences and those of the two other novice teachers who agreed to participate in this study, I envision helping other new teachers as they begin their journey in a profession that is both rewarding and challenging. There is comfort in knowing others have had similar experiences and through the process of gathering and analyzing data, I learned about the successes and difficulties of other new teachers, which helped me to put my own experience in perspective. I asked open-ended questions of my participants and heard rich

and powerful stories of their experiences. It was my intention that the new teachers who told me their stories would gain a sense of empowerment as they shared their stories and offered suggestions for improving mentorship programs and the actual experience of mentorship.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Familiarity with relevant literature helped me draft research focus questions and assisted me with my analysis. As I accessed the mentorship narratives described by participants in this study and compared them with mentorship programs as Yukon decision makers described them, the literature prepared me to listen carefully to participants' stories. I listened for themes that confirmed or questioned findings that other researchers have noted. In this chapter, I present the research and professional literature that informed my understanding of mentorship as it relates to beginning teachers. I define mentorship as a potential solution to early attrition and then outline some key areas related to mentorship: (a) the needs of new teachers, (b) the role of the principal in new teacher mentorship, (c) the characteristics of quality mentoring programs, and (d) induction program examples from other jurisdictions.

Prior to the data collection and in order to discuss potential forms of mentorship, I also reviewed videotaped narratives of new teachers posted on YouTube, as a preliminary exploration of themes that could emerge in the narratives of my participants. The YouTube videos that I selected were online case studies from reputable professional sources (New Teacher Center, 2009; Illinois Education Center, 2009). The examples of induction programs mentioned in these case studies, as well as in the published literature, offered insight into the needs of new teachers and the common characteristics of effective mentorship programs.

Definition of Mentorship

Definitions of mentoring vary with the context. Mentoring can be seen as a form of leadership or the communication of knowledge, where one who is considered more experienced in teaching offers to share that expertise with a novice teacher. The concept of mentoring encourages the novice to grow professionally and personally through the guidance of an experienced individual (Looney, 1997). In 1999, Brighton asserted that 60 percent of current teachers in the United States would be eligible to retire within the next six years, which signified an increased concern for attracting, supporting, and retaining new teachers. However, teachers have one of the highest attrition rates of any profession; in particular, new teachers are apt to leave (Heller, 2004). An American report described the problem vividly as “pouring teachers into a bucket with a fist-sized hole in the bottom” (National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future, as cited in McCann, Johannessen, and Ricca, 2005, p. 30). Although teacher education facilities may be able to supply enough new teachers to prevent teacher shortages, there is an increasing concern about retaining these new teachers past their first few years in the classroom.

In an effort to retain and support new teachers there has been an increase in the implementation of induction programs (Shakrani, 2008). The critical aspect of such programs is mentoring, where novice teachers are paired with experienced teachers who support their transition into the profession (Tillman, 2005). Mentorship programs are important for the retention of new teachers because they create support systems that assist more rapid development toward effective teaching (Andrews & Quinn, 2005). Novice teachers can benefit from the years of experience that veteran teachers possess and they can continue to learn about teaching through meaningful interactions with their mentors (Parker, Ndoeye, & Imig, 2009).

The purposes of mentorship programs, according to Heller (2004), are to create an atmosphere of community, to provide expert training in the profession, to retain good teachers, and to provide support for the new teachers during times of self-doubt. Mentorship programs are more likely to achieve these functions when competent, experienced mentors are available or there are resources available to prepare new mentors for the role. It should be noted that a capable and experienced teacher may not also be a capable mentor, without personal commitment to the goals of the program as well as guidance and support in the form of resources, including time. The importance of time is a success factor in effective mentorship programs where mentors are periodically released from their classrooms to concentrate on the needs of the beginning teachers through the full academic year (Parker, Ndove, & Imig, 2009).

On their own or as components of broader induction programs, mentorship programs often match a novice teacher with an experienced one, although the mentor teachers rarely have any special training or qualifications (Howe, 2006). However, mentor preparation is developing and many school districts in the United States and Canada now provide training for the mentors of new teachers. In North Carolina, for example, mentor teachers must hold a mentor license to participate in the state induction program (Howe, 2006). As Hall and Simeral (2008) stated, a mentor is like a bridge builder, spanning the chasm between two entities to build a deeper understanding, strengthen the bond, and open communication lines to encourage mutual development (p. 24).

However, Howe (2006) provided a sharp critique of mentoring programs as part of new teacher induction:

Teachers need a gradual acculturation into the profession with a structured and well-supervised clinical induction period. While many school districts offer initial teacher

orientations and some have mentoring programs, these often fall way short of providing beginning teachers with the support they require. (p. 292)

Parker, Ndove, and Imig (2009) also stated that the first few years of teaching are most critical for long-term retention of teachers and novice teachers who are adequately supported with effective mentoring during those first years are more likely to become the successful and effective teachers all students deserve. Hellsten, Prytula, Ebanks, and Lai (2009) emphasized the importance of communication and skill development for new teachers, which in turn results in satisfaction in the profession.

The Needs of New Teachers

Teaching is a complex and challenging career and teachers new to the profession have many needs that have been identified in the literature. These needs include but are not limited to: academic preparedness, difficult teaching assignments, and emotional support (Stotsky, 2006). The needs of new teachers can also vary because of different cultural, social, geopolitical, and economic contexts; however, mentoring remains a common component in aiding the specific development that is needed (Howe, 2006). The needs of new teachers may also vary depending on the subjects and ages of students to be taught.

The needs of new teachers, as reported in the literature, appear to be a complex interaction of academic, emotional, and relationship concerns. Anxiety over the quality of their performance of teaching tasks, which I group together under the category of *classroom performance*, appears to contribute to the emotional stresses experienced by novice teachers, which include feelings of being isolated and overwhelmed. The difficult teaching assignments that are often given to novice teachers may compound their worries about their own competency and amplify their self-doubt. In the first few years of teaching, there are new relationships to develop with students, parents, and colleagues. Combined with a heavy

workload of preparation, marking, and extracurricular activities, these academic, emotional, and relationship issues may interact to produce burnout. Novice teachers may struggle with developing a strong identity as a teacher and as a result, begin to see themselves as unsuited for the profession.

Classroom Performance

I have categorized content and pedagogical knowledge as well as classroom management, assessment, and familiarity with school routines as *classroom performance*. Academic expectations, which include both content and pedagogical knowledge, are the first and most important component of what beginning teachers need to know (Stotsky, 2006). However, classroom management, assessment and reporting duties, and responsibilities related to school procedures are also part of the reality of day-to-day life in the classroom that new teachers may not be prepared for (Croasmun, Hampton, & Herrmann, 1997).

In their study of novice high school teachers, McCann, Johannessen, and Ricca (2005) found that workload, time management, and fatigue issues were one of nine categories of concern. Knowledge of subject area and curriculum as well as anxiety about evaluation and grading were also included. New teachers benefit from someone who can help them discover the underlying principles of the curriculum and identify the areas that are most important. This kind of support empowers novice teachers to make decisions and adjust teaching materials and activities to suit the needs of their students. McCann, Johannessen, and Ricca also responded to the voices of the novice teachers in their study by recommending that mentors help new teachers to anticipate crises and plan problem-solving strategies in advance. For example, a mentor and novice teacher might talk about what to do when parents complain about grades or how to handle disruptive student behaviour.

Karsenti and Collin (2013) surveyed Canadian teachers who had left the profession and expanded their study to teachers who had witnessed others leave. The most consistent reasons for leaving the profession were related to workload, including long hours after class spent in preparation and marking. Another significant concern was classroom management. More than a third of teachers who had left the profession and nearly half of the teachers who had witnessed a departure from teaching identified student misbehavior as a factor that contributed to their decision. Half of teachers who had left were concerned about lack of student motivation and a third of these teachers also identified a lack of respect from students as a reason for leaving teaching. Although these concerns appeared to develop into relationship issues, the problems may have begun when teachers lacked the skills to manage and motivate students and to earn their respect. Specific suggestions about teaching strategies to try and follow-through observation and discussion with a mentor may have alleviated some of these problems before they turned into patterns of interaction that led to the loss of a teacher.

Participants in the Canada-wide Karsenti and Collins (2013) study suggested that improvements in specific teaching conditions might have saved their careers. Support, particularly from administrators, was noted prominently, as were lighter workloads for beginning teachers and more time for preparation. Many teachers would have welcomed the opportunity to teach the same grade or subjects two years in a row, to provide them with opportunities to improve their content knowledge and refine their teaching strategies. Teachers who left the profession would have appreciated more opportunities for communication and collaboration with colleagues. In the Canada-wide study, salary was not identified as a reason for leaving.

In contrast, a national study of Americans who left teaching after the first year (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003) revealed that nearly 40% left to pursue another job, which may mean that they were attracted by improved salaries. Of the approximately 30% of respondents in this study who said they left teaching because of job dissatisfaction, three quarters identified low salaries as an important reason for their decision. Therefore, one in four American teachers who left teaching after their first year claimed that they did so because of a lack of job satisfaction rather than low salary. The specific working conditions that contributed to their dissatisfaction included: student discipline problems, lack of support from school administrators, poor student motivation, and a lack of influence over school-wide and classroom decision making.

Ingersoll and Smith (2003) noted that findings related to working conditions were important because they point to “policy-amenable” solutions (Attrition Among Beginning Teachers, para. 4). They made the point that increasing salaries for American teachers may be an obvious but expensive solution to alleviating shortages of qualified teachers. Although salary is much less of a concern in Canada, improving working conditions to reduce teacher attrition for new teachers lies within the control of decision makers here as well.

Emotional Needs

The daily challenges and uncertainties of the profession are often amplified for novice teachers, who have little experience to draw on, and so they may be left feeling alone and inadequate. Scherer (1999) affirmed that the isolation of new teachers within their classrooms and the normalizing of autonomy and non-interference may make it difficult for new teachers to ask for and receive help. The feeling of isolation may be compounded if a novice teacher has an especially difficult assignment. Novice teachers in the study by McCann, Johannessen,

and Ricca (2005) often expressed feelings of hopelessness about their overwhelming workload.

Moir (1990/2011) described the intense emotions that accumulate for many novice teachers in the late fall of their first year, in what she called the *disillusionment* phase.

After six to eight weeks of nonstop work and stress, new teachers enter the disillusionment phase....New teachers begin questioning both their commitment and their competence. Many new teachers get sick during this phase....At this point, the accumulated stress of the first-year teacher, coupled with months of excessive time allotted to teaching, often brings complaints from family members and friends. This is a very difficult and challenging phase for new entries into the profession. They express self-doubt, have lower self-esteem and question their professional commitment. In fact, getting through this phase may be the toughest challenge they face as a new teacher. (Disillusionment Phase, para. 1, 7)

Hoerr (2005) discussed the importance of meeting new teachers' personal needs, as they adjust to working longer hours and experiencing less success than they may have expected. He described regular meetings facilitated by a school counselor as safe places for new teachers to talk about their frustrations, either in small groups or in private sessions, and to gain access to other support resources specific to their needs. He believed that the opportunity for these meetings sent the message that new teachers were valued as individuals as well as teachers.

Hockley and Hemmings (2001) studied the stressors and coping mechanisms of student teachers. Participants reported high levels of anxiety related to the practicum experience, centered around anxiety about being evaluated and managing workload and roles. Strategies for coping with stress included communicating with others, self-help through reflection and optimism, relaxation and recreation, teaching and management strategies, and organization. It would seem reasonable to assume that similar stressors and coping mechanisms might continue, to some degree, in a novice teacher's first teaching position.

However, the emotional needs of new teachers are uniquely individual and will vary depending on the confidence levels as well as coping mechanisms of each novice.

Relationship Needs

McCann, Johannessen, and Ricca (2005) identified five of nine categories of novice teacher concerns as having to do with relationships. Novice teachers were concerned about how students responded to them and how to talk to parents, especially those who had concerns. They were concerned about their reputation as competent teachers with their colleagues and especially with supervisors or principals. These relationship concerns were impacting their often fragile identity as teachers.

Karsenti and Collin (2013) reviewed the literature to identify four main factors for early departures from teaching. In addition to task-related factors, personal characteristics, and socioeconomic conditions, they identified failed relationships with education colleagues. In their study of teachers who did leave the profession, these authors found that new teachers who were struggling with the tasks assigned to them would either turn to administrators or to their teaching colleagues for support. Teachers identified lack of support from both groups as reasons for leaving the profession. The main problems with administrator relationships were either a lack of involvement with the novice teacher's problems or a lack of trust on the part of the novice teacher. Teachers hesitated to ask for support from principals because they were afraid to appear incompetent and they were concerned about job security. Struggling new teachers tended to turn more to other teachers for support, although some participants reported that lack of time as well as a scarcity of team spirit made their attempts at finding informal mentors ineffective.

In a handbook on mentoring beginning teachers produced by the Alberta Teachers' Association (n.d), relationship needs were identified as the need to be accepted and valued in

the school and the community, to be appreciated by colleagues for their fresh outlook, and to be treated as colleagues in spite of their lack of experience. However, the authors of the handbook also provided a needs assessment for both mentors and their protégés in a formal mentorship program, based on the work of Posden and Denmark (as cited in ATA, n.d., p. 37). For mentoring to be effective, it seems wise to consider the variety of needs that a novice teacher may have and adjust the specific support offered by the mentor accordingly.

Needs as Expressed in Video Narratives

Mentoring and support of new teachers is a popular topic on YouTube and various organizations have showcased narratives from new teachers that focus on experiences with mentorship. Before I began my own data collection and analysis, I reviewed several of these video narratives and found specific themes, including *emotional support*, *challenges faced in first years of teaching*, *teaching strategies*, and *introduction to the operations of individual schools*. In the following paragraphs, I describe the video clips that I reviewed.

The *New Teacher Center* (2009), which has various locations around the United States, was originally founded in 1998 as part of University of California at Santa Cruz. This organization currently works with school districts, state policy makers, and educators, and used YouTube to present experiences with mentorship programs in the voices of the new teachers themselves. In one clip Issac Foster, a beginning teacher, discussed the two-sided learning curve he faced as a new teacher: how to be a teacher and how to relate to his students. He was then shown having a discussion with his mentor, George, who brought to light aspects of Isaac's teaching style that the mentee may not have been aware of before.

Mentor and mentee went on to analyze how Isaac's teaching style had been targeting specific types of learners and they set a goal for Isaac to be more aware of how he presents material to his students in the classroom. Isaac referred to this type of ongoing collaboration as the key

factor in his development as a teacher. His mentor, George, described the mentorship program as a three-part process beginning with some dialogue, then providing some emotional support, and finally identifying a focus together and identifying strategies for the mentee to implement. George's mentorship of Isaac is an interesting approach because specific teaching strategies and feedback were used to address emotional insecurity.

The *Illinois Education Association* (2009) is an association of more than 133,000 members composed of Illinois elementary and secondary teachers, higher education faculty and staff, educational support professionals, retired educators and college students preparing to become teachers. This organization used YouTube video to document a new teacher mentor and induction program that seeks to provide a network of training and support for teachers entering the classroom for the first time. The program helps prevent new teacher burnout by providing veteran teacher assistance with everything from student discipline to best teaching practices. The top priority for this new approach to mentoring is high student achievement.

The director for the region implementing the mentor and induction program, Jim Tammen, discussed the challenges of new teachers discovering their own identities and becoming their own persons in front of a class. The program was developed as a result of the lack of quality mentorship programs in the area and with direct consultation with the Consortium for Educational Change (CEC), which began in 1987. Several teachers discussed the actual layout of the school as a success factor for the program. The new teachers are situated in classrooms near veteran teachers working with similar grades and subjects, so they are able to access their expertise frequently and conveniently. Time is also built into the new teachers' weekly schedule for the much needed mentor/mentee conversations. These and other techniques outlined in this new teacher induction and mentoring program video are

strategies to reduce stress experienced by new teachers and increase teacher retention and the effectiveness of less-experienced teachers in the school system.

The Principal's Role

The research literature emphasizes the crucial role that school principals play in the lives and mentorship of new teachers. Principals are described by Heller (2004) as standing at the crossroads of the faculty, students, parents, community, board, state policymakers, and representatives of higher education. It is because of this position that they are vitally important to the support and success of teachers entering the profession. Heller (2004) described this crucial function:

In historical terms, the principal must once again become the lead or principal teacher, not the manager, of a building. Unless we rethink the whole concept of the principal's role as an educational leader, a teacher of teachers, then there is little hope of bringing into our schools the type of talent that we need. (p. 6).

To ensure new teacher retention increases and contributes to student success, several authors have asserted that change in the principal's role, however uncomfortable, is necessary. Millie Pierce (as cited in Heller, 2004), Director of the Principals' Center at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, made this suggestion about the principal's job:

Perhaps two leaders are needed in every school: a principal teacher and a principal administrator. The principal teacher would have a well-established teaching history rooted in strong instructional practice. This person would spend the year supervising teaching teams, coaching, giving feedback, and teaching teachers to engage in deep, reflective practice on unambiguous learning outcomes. The principal teacher would be accountable for student achievement, curriculum, and technology, and have authority to hire and fire. (p. 9)

Meanwhile, the principal administrator's position would focus on plant management.

Several schools already have a principal as well as a vice-principal, so perhaps these roles could be redefined to address Pierce's suggestion. Heller (2004) went on to state that the principal also has the responsibility of creating a supportive and collaborative atmosphere

among all teachers within the school: “New teachers should not be left to learn wholly by experience, when the knowledge and support they need resides in the room next to theirs” (p. 7).

Some of the literature suggests that having teacher induction programs built into the individual school is one way to ensure novice teachers are getting the support and mentorship they require to remain in the profession. The principal’s job is to engage in mentoring behaviors in order to help new teachers develop the necessary skills and strategies to enhance their abilities in the profession (Hall & Simeral, 2008). Principals also possess a tremendous amount of expertise and access to resources to share with their teachers. Hall and Simeral (2008) advised that principals should “channel a good portion of their energy into challenging teachers to extend their thinking, step beyond their comfort zones, and push themselves toward excellence” (p. 25).

However, new teachers’ anxiety over the principal’s approval (McCann, Johannessen, & Ricca, 2005) appears to increase when the principal is seen as more of an evaluator than a mentor. Wayne, Youngs, and Fleischman (2005) recommended that principals promote learning for new teachers through the evaluation process, which should include observations of teaching and post-observation conferences. An increasingly more common response is to separate the functions of evaluation and mentoring by providing teacher mentors who support learning but have no authority to evaluate performance.

Useem and Nield (2005) documented strategies to retain novice teachers that led to impressive results in urban Philadelphia. As part of a comprehensive induction program, superintendents began to evaluate principals on their success in reducing attrition. Mandatory training was offered and principals were required to make a teacher retention plan. The

following year, new teachers reported feeling welcomed and supported at a higher rate than they had done in previous years.

Rather than provide direct mentorship, principals can support new teachers through the decisions they make about school-wide discipline policies, hiring, workload and resource allocation, and through their influence on the professional culture among teachers. Useem and Nield (2005) reported that tightening school discipline policies, including transferring seriously disruptive students to alternative schools, contributed to overall improvement of working conditions for new teachers. Moving to school-based hiring was also helpful because it allowed both new teachers and school principals to consider the fit between the teacher and the school. Gilbert (2005) recommended that meetings and paperwork be kept manageable.

Patterson (2005) used the term *hazing* to call attention to the problem of new teachers consistently experiencing poorer working conditions than their more experienced colleagues. Thomas, Johannessen, and Ricca (2005) also advocated for a shift from giving new teachers the most difficult assignments, described as an outdated *survival-of-the-fittest* mentality, toward more compassionate induction that is also more cost-effective. Although hazing may not be done intentionally, patterns of preferential treatment based on seniority seem to result in a set of unfair practices that can be overwhelming and intensely frustrating for new teachers. Principals who are aware of the effects of these practices may begin to change them.

As a new teacher support provider in California, Patterson (2005) identified several practices that can drive new teachers out of high schools, including teaching a wider array of courses (commonly referred to as *preps*), teaching the most challenging grade level, teaching more entry-level courses, teaching in more than one classroom, having an inadequate supply of textbooks, having a classroom some distance from other members of their department, and being expected to organize extra-curricular activities. Patterson noted that “students most in

need of highly qualified and experienced teachers most often pay the price for new teacher burnout and turnover” (p. 23) but also held out hope that administrators of schools and districts could provide students with a better education by creating “respectful, supportive environments in which new teachers receive equitable treatment” (p. 23).

Wayne, Youngs, and Fleischman (2005) summed up the principal’s role in supporting new teachers in three categories: (a) insist on quality mentoring, (b) integrate new teachers into school-wide learning opportunities, and (c) promote learning during evaluation. According to these authors, mentors should be well-prepared and focus on improving instruction rather than providing emotional support. New teachers should have opportunities to join collaborative teams of teachers and participate in school-based professional development. Finally, the performance evaluation process conducted by the principal can include instructional support. However, this advice comes with a caution against participation in so many learning activities that the new teacher’s classroom suffers; it is best to allow the new teacher some choice as to the activities that will be most helpful.

Learning Communities as Mentoring Cultures

Professional Learning Communities (PLCS) are formal teams of teachers collaborating to set goals for student achievement, implement strategies, and collect data to show whether achievement has improved (Dufour & Eaker, 1998; Dufour & Marzano, 2011). The impact of this approach to teachers’ collaborative work across North America has been substantial and has implications for informal mentorship. Novice teachers can be supported as a participating member of a collaborative team. Gilbert (2005) noted that some districts have created learning communities particularly for new teachers but open to others as well. Gilbert challenged educators to evolve a form of mentorship “embedded in the day to day work of teaching by building collaborative structures that offer new teachers multiple

opportunities to interact with more experienced colleagues *while doing meaningful work*" (p. 39). She made the point that such teams could provide both instructional and emotional support.

Marzano and Dufour (2011) proposed that principals could maximize their instructional leadership by working with teams of teachers structured as learning communities rather than focusing on supporting individual teachers. These authors described the school principal's role in building a culture of collaborative learning to combat the persistent isolation of teaching. Part of the principal's role is to choose team leaders who are highly respected by colleagues, believe in the PLC process, and are willing to persist with inquiry and experimentation until achievement improves. As for formal mentorship with pairs of mentors and their protégés, the skill and commitment of collaborative team leaders are expected to determine the overall effectiveness of the process.

Induction Program Examples

There are a variety of successful teacher induction programs around the world and although contexts differ, much can be learned from comparisons. To begin to understand the range as well as the similarities of these programs, I looked at literature describing programs in California, Germany, and Shanghai and also in another jurisdiction in northern Canada, the Northwest Territories. Although each program has unique features there are also some commonalities among them, including offering new teachers a reduced workload in order to leave time for collaboration to make sense of the practical teaching experience. Another theme that emerged from the literature is the need for properly trained mentors.

California.

In the late 1990's California established a mandate that all new teachers participate in an induction program (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing & California

Department of Education, 1997) referred to as the *Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment Program* (BTSA). New teachers receive individual mentoring and ongoing support in their first two years of teaching. The new teachers benefit greatly from specific training received by their mentors.

Howe (2006) described the key elements of the BTSA program:

Key elements of the BTSA program include mentoring and individualized formative assessment for the purpose of improving practice, as opposed to formal teacher evaluation. During a two-year induction period an Individualized Induction Plan (IIP) is developed based on the novice teacher's emerging needs. An IIP includes goals, specific strategies for achieving those goals, and documentation of progress in meeting those goals. In addition, new teachers participate in intensive learning activities that build on their preservice preparation and lead to lifelong learning. (p. 290)

Shanghai.

Jensen (2013) reported on new teacher mentoring in Shanghai as contributing to the high performance of their students on the OECD PISA rankings. The unique features of this mentorship program are that it focuses on student learning, mentors take their responsibilities seriously, a substantial amount of time each week is designated for mentoring, and mentors and new teachers participate together in year-long research teams. In Shanghai, all teachers have mentors but new teachers have two mentors – one who works in the same subject area and another who focuses on general pedagogy. Mentors help with lesson planning and reviewing student work. Classroom observations and follow-up discussion occur on a regular basis, often once a week. Promotions to senior positions depend on the quality of their mentoring, and so it is taken very seriously. Research groups, described as functioning like Professional Learning Communities (Dufour and Eaker, 1998), are common and consist of teams of teachers who focus on a student learning need with classroom experimentation and written reports of results.

Research groups often observe each other's lessons so new teachers get to see a variety of experienced teachers in action. Jensen (2013) made a strong statement on the effectiveness of this comprehensive approach to induction:

The evidence is very clear – not just in East Asian systems but across the world – that feedback to teachers on how to improve their teaching based on meaningful observation of their classroom teaching is the most effective form of professional learning because it has the greatest effect on student learning. (p. 77)

The description of this mentoring system that is constantly improving is complemented with a description of how it is funded. The main cost is not for external experts but for teachers' working time, which is paid for by reducing teaching hours and increasing class sizes.

The Canadian North.

The Northwest Territories (NWT) Induction program is a program for beginning teachers that was introduced as an answer to the growing concern of teachers leaving the profession in the first three years of teaching (NWT Department of Education, Culture, and Employment, 2008). The goals of the NWT program are described as: improving teacher performance; retaining competent teachers in the profession; promoting professional and personal well-being; building a foundation for continued professional growth through structured contact with mentors, administrators and other veteran teachers; and transmitting the culture of the school and teaching profession.

The induction program models described here have provided innovative and insightful ideas into what makes mentorship successful. Yukon teachers, teacher educators, decision makers, and program planners can use these various successes in order to enhance mentorship programs in Yukon.

Common Characteristics of Effective Mentorship Programs

Howe (2006) described the key elements of a successful mentorship program for novice teachers:

To use a metaphor, effective teacher induction is like a chemical reaction that requires certain ingredients to take place. The key element is time for reflection. The critical catalyst in this teacher education equation is to provide novice teachers with experienced, well-qualified and specially trained mentors. (p. 295)

McCann, Johannessen, and Ricca (2005) made recommendations for an effective and meaningful mentoring program, based on their examination of the literature and the responses provided by beginning teachers. They emphasized the careful selection of mentors as well as training in communication and peer coaching techniques. They noted that mentors should be prepared to respond to the specific concerns of the new teacher they are working with as well as helping the new teacher feel a part of the school community. There should be regularly scheduled contacts between the new teacher and the mentor, but quality programs should also be organized to acknowledge the exhaustion that sets in for teachers after the first nine or ten weeks of school. The Alliance for Excellent Education (as cited in Wayne, Youngs, and Fleischman, 2005), described an ideal comprehensive induction package to include reduced workload, a helpful mentor teaching the same grade or subject, seminars focused on beginning teachers' needs, and time for collaborating with other teachers. Advice for principals added learning during evaluation as a key feature in a comprehensive mentoring program.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I have reviewed academic and professional literature related to the driving concepts of this study: a definition of mentorship, the needs of new teachers, the role of the principal in new teacher mentorship, and examples of induction programs, which

include mentoring, from a variety of locations. I have also reviewed videos that describe mentorship programs in the voices of new teachers and their mentors. This collection of sources provided the background I needed to access and interpret the experiences of new teacher participants through their narratives. The literature and professional resources contributed to my initial understanding of mentorship and helped to emphasize the increasing importance for school systems to focus on the professional needs of new teachers in hopes of reducing attrition and improving student learning.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH PROCEDURES

In this study I have used a narrative approach. The data were collected as personal narratives, which I guided by asking semi-structured interview questions (see Appendix A). I presented participant responses to my interview questions as narratives and then analyzed them, including my own anonymous response, answer my overall research question: *How do new teachers in Yukon (Whitehorse) describe their experiences of formal and informal mentorship?* I also used more specific questions to analyze the re-storied narratives in terms of the support needs of beginning teachers, the ways that mentoring support has helped them overcome challenges, and the changes they would suggest to mentoring as they experienced it. To complete my analysis, I compared participant narratives with information about Yukon mentoring programs provided in interviews with decision makers from two key organizations: (a) the employer, the Yukon Department of Education, and (b) the Yukon Teachers' Association, which has traditionally partnered with the employer to fund and deliver professional development, including mentorship programs.

The importance of research questions for focusing both quantitative and qualitative studies was described by Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2006):

Research questions have several roles. In particular, they provide a framework for conducting the study, helping the researcher to organize the research and giving it relevance, direction, and coherence, thereby helping to keep the researcher focused during the course of the investigation. Research questions also delimit the study, revealing its boundaries. Additionally, research questions give rise to the type of data that are eventually collected.

I used my research questions as pre-existing categories for analysis and within and across each question, I looked for themes pertinent to mentorship as experienced by the participants.

I drew comparisons among participants and highlighted commonalities. I also compared the experiences of my participants with themes emphasized in the research and professional literature on mentoring experiences and programs for new teachers.

Rationale for Narrative Method

The method for this study was qualitative and naturalistic narrative, loosely structured by predetermined research questions and contextualized by comparing personal stories to decision makers' descriptions of mentoring programs. I wanted to understand the detailed reality of the experience of mentorship for a small number of new teachers (Marshall & Rossman, 1995), which could only be accessed effectively by hearing the voices of the new teachers themselves. Creswell (2007) described narrative as beginning with the experiences as expressed in lived and told stories of individuals, where the procedures for implementing this type of research focus on one or two individuals, collecting data through their stories, retelling them, and making sense of those experiences.

Effectiveness of Local Stories for Inspiring Change

It was not important to me that the study have a large enough sample size to make my findings or results generalizable as recommendations. I was more concerned that the stories I collected would be personal and authentic, based not on what was intended by program planners or decision makers but on the actual experience of new teachers. As I

planned this study, I believed that personal, local stories could be more effective than other data for inspiring educational leaders to initiate change. The changes that may occur as a result of this study include: mentorship program review and revision, increased teacher contributions to supportive school cultures, increased instructional leadership by principals, and even increased responsibility for new teachers themselves to access the mentoring opportunities offered to them.

In a similar approach to stimulating change, a survey of new teachers in six districts (Gilbert, 2005) produced narrative vignettes that helped to improve induction and mentorship programs. Although the findings of the study were similar to national findings, local data had greater significance for local decision makers. As a result of the Gilbert study, several districts increased opportunities for new teachers to work with more experienced colleagues in a variety of ways and more attention was paid to matching teachers of similar subjects for mentoring.

Rapport with Co-participants

Narrative inquiry requires a sincerity and sensitivity between researcher and participant. Narrative inquiry was an effective method for this study because it involved face-to-face encounters with participants, data were collected in a natural setting, and the context for events was considered (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). In other words, as an interviewer, I needed to develop rapport with my participants and obtain their trust, which I was able to do because I had shared the similar experience of being a new teacher. I had experienced challenges and times of self-doubt during the early years of my career and the two other new teacher participants could relate to these feelings. Rather than introducing bias, I believe this co-participant relationship empowered each of us to tell our own stories more confidently and authentically.

Narrative and Empowerment

Writing in the field of community psychology, Rappaport (1995) established a clear link between narrative method and empowerment. First, she defined empowerment as

an intentional, ongoing process centered in the local community, involving mutual respect, critical reflection, caring and group participation, through which people lacking an equal share of valued resources gain greater access to and control over those resources. (Cornwall University Empowerment Group, as cited in Rappaport, 1995, p. 802)

To explain this definition further, Rappaport identified the ability to tell one's own story as a powerful personal resource.

Narrative requires privileging the voices of those whose lives are the subject of the study. Mentorship was a topic the new teacher participants were eager to talk about and this study offered them an opportunity to share their experiences and suggestions for future new teachers. Creating an opportunity to reflect on my own experience and contribute to improved experiences for others was an empowering method for me and seemed to be so for the two other participants as well. There is an innate satisfaction in telling one's story to an attentive listener and the idea of building a more positive future helped us reframe some of the more painful aspects of our experience as a valuable learning experience.

Limitations of Narrative Method

In addition to listing the benefits of the method chosen for this study, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of the narrative method. First, I need to emphasize that the sample size of three participants is very small and not sufficient to represent new teachers in Yukon. However, the understanding that a few compelling stories such as these may become catalysts for further local investigation of beginning teachers' experiences puts a lack of generalizability outside my purpose for the study.

Specifically in narrative studies, researchers need to tell the story of their participants while also being reflective of their own personal background (Cresswell, 2007).

Misinterpretation of the data as well as the questions is also important to note. Participants can misinterpret guiding questions for a variety of reasons, such as not fully hearing the question because they are thinking about an anecdotal story they want to share. I conducted this study in a community with a small number of schools and a total population under 25,000 people, which may have resulted in a fear of disclosure among participants. The new teacher participants might have been concerned that their stories would be recognized, which could have had consequences to their teaching careers.

Stating my bias was important to the study; however, I had to strive to control that bias because narrative inquiry as a methodology intends to achieve an objective voice for the analysis as explained by Cresswell (2007), who goes on to state that how we write is a reflection of our own cultural experiences and we bring those into the research we conduct. As a new teacher, I remember feeling insecure and inadequate about my abilities to succeed in the classroom. Having my own classroom was very different than teaching in a practicum with the support of a cooperating teacher. I was able to empathize with the new teacher participants' concerns about asking questions because I too felt that asking for help was a sign of weakness and that if I wanted to prove I was a good teacher I should keep my struggles and concerns to myself. This caution seemed especially important because I was in a temporary assignment with no job security, so I felt that seeking help constantly might have consequences in finding a permanent job as a teacher.

I was cognizant of how difficult participating in this study might be for the new teachers for fear that their responses might cause them to be recognized. That fear of being honest is a valid concern for a new teacher who is striving to find a permanent assignment

and it is because I empathized with the new teachers in this position, as well as university ethics requirements, that I ensured anonymity in this study. The new teacher participants volunteered to participate in this study and so they wanted to share their triumphs. They also saw this study as an opportunity to have a voice and share their thoughts and suggestions on new teacher mentorship in Yukon based on their experiences.

Procedure

I interviewed two Whitehorse teachers who had less than three years of experience. I also told my own story as a novice teacher by responding to the semi-structured interview questions and included my response anonymously among the participant stories. To learn more about the Yukon context for new teacher mentorship, I interviewed three decision makers – two from the *Yukon Teachers' Association* and one from the *Yukon Department of Education* (see Appendix A, Part Two). I had originally proposed to interview only one representative from the Yukon Teachers' Association; however the opportunity arose to interview a second participant who had an important role in the set-up of a formal teacher mentorship program. The decision makers that I interviewed were the individuals in each organization who were most familiar with the history of formal mentorship programs in Yukon. The vision of mentorship that these decision makers expressed provided an interesting comparison to the experiences of the three beginning teachers whose stories I collected and retold.

Finding Participants

I found the teacher participants using the following procedure: (a) I sent a written request for participants to the *Yukon Teachers' Association Mentorship Program Coordinator*, (b) I contacted the *Yukon Native Teacher Education Program Coordinator* at Yukon College. Both institutions had access to potential teacher participants. I asked both

organizations to forward my request to early career teachers, who could then contact me directly. I found the lack of responses disappointing – there were only three in total and one who was at first interested later chose to withdraw. I wondered if many teachers begin their careers in the smaller communities around Yukon and my focus on Whitehorse, where I began my own teaching career, narrowed the pool of possible participants. I also wondered if teachers in Yukon may be unfamiliar with participating in research and therefore may not value that type of collaboration or see it as a part of their role. However, I thought it would be beneficial to proceed with the study with two participants and my own story, to provide some perspective on the experiences of beginning teachers in the Yukon, a perspective that is not currently included in the literature.

Following Research Ethics Board (REB) approval for my study from the university, which also required approval from the Yukon Department of Education, I confirmed the participation of the volunteers. The study focused on three new teachers with varied educational backgrounds: (a) a *Yukon Native Teacher Education Program* graduate; (b) a teacher who had come to Yukon from the southern provinces; and (c) a Yukon-raised participant who received teacher education in a southern province. After receiving the signed consent forms, I set up dates for face-to-face interviews. The interviews took approximately an hour each and although I had intended to do face-to-face interviews, one was conducted via Skype because the participant was out of town. All participants requested a copy of the finished paper. All narratives have been presented using pseudonyms, so that participant stories and experiences could be shared freely while honoring confidentiality.

Ethical Concerns

The teacher participants and the decision makers I interviewed all signed informed consents before embarking on any aspect of the study. Real names were not used at any stage

of the research process. However, Yukon is a relatively small community so it is impossible to guarantee that the decision-makers would not be identified by the roles they played in their organizations. All participants were aware of the option to withdraw from the study at any time or to have their information withdrawn from the data. All typed information was stored on a facial recognition and password protected computer. I was the only one with access to interview transcripts with names attached. I completed my own transcription and so a confidentiality agreement with an additional person was not needed.

Data Analysis

After completing the interviews, I transcribed the interview responses with a focus on accuracy. I presented the data for the beginning teachers as complete narratives, written to give the reader the sense of being present at the interview (Creswell, 2007). Participants had an opportunity to review their own completed narratives.

After reconstructing the narratives as whole stories, I first analyzed participant responses with attention to my research questions as pre-existing categories. I then continued working with the data to look for common themes, make observations, and identify insights. Data analysis consisted of identifying themes within the narratives to describe mentorship as experienced by the participants. The participant narratives also described mentorship programming ideas for new teachers in Yukon. As a last step in the analysis, I compared the experiences of beginning teachers as expressed in their narratives to the descriptions of mentorship programs in Yukon offered by local decision makers.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter I provided a rationale for the narrative method and outlined my research procedure. I emphasized my belief in the effectiveness of gathering local stories for inspiring change in induction or mentorship programs, which was confirmed in a more

extensive study by Gilbert (2005). I discussed the importance and potential bias in contributing my own story anonymously among those I gathered from participants. Drawing on work from community psychology, I explored the definition of empowerment that Rappaport (1995) linked with narrative methodology. To conclude my rationale for choosing a narrative method, I acknowledged limitations of the method and possible limitations on the quality of the data. The second half of the chapter included details about my research procedures, including how I found participants and how I dealt with ethical issues.

CHAPTER 4: EXPERIENCES OF MENTORSHIP

As I conducted this study I learned about the current mentorship program available to new teachers in Yukon as well as informal methods of mentorship experienced by the new teacher participants. I was fortunate to interview a representative from the Yukon Department of Education as well as two representatives from the Yukon Teachers' Association (YTA). I will begin with a description of the current mentorship program and how it is advertised, funded, and managed. I will then present the new teachers' stories and their experiences with mentorship in Yukon, followed by an analysis relating the stories to my research questions. In conclusion, I will offer suggestions for consideration based on the findings of the study.

Yukon Mentorship Program

In speaking with the three decision makers, I discovered that they have similar perspectives on mentorship for new teachers. They agreed that mentorship was important for all new teachers and an important factor in new teacher retention. They shared the view that mentorship for new teachers would enhance the contribution of new teachers to the education community. For example,

Continuity is good both for the teacher of course and for the students...when somebody has longevity in a community, they buy into not only to the school but they also buy in to the rest of the community such as getting involved in community service groups, recreational groups. (Interview, Yukon Teachers' Association Representative, May, 2012).

There were also comments made on the importance of mentorship in the rural communities of Yukon. "An issue that I've noticed is how do we find...how do we get new teachers, or teachers, to go into the rural communities and become part of that community and to put a commitment in to stay for the long haul?" (Interview, YTA representative, May, 2012). These respondents agreed that mentorship might be a way to support new teachers and allow them to feel a part of the community in which they were working.

During my discussions with the Yukon Teachers' Association participants, I learned that a need for a mentorship program for new teachers was recognized in the early 2000s. The current mentorship program, which has been in place in Yukon for about nine years, involves a partnership between YTA and Department of Education. The program is strictly voluntary and novice teachers must self-identify to be involved. Although self-identifying is the main way for new teachers to join the mentorship program, new teachers may also be referred by experienced colleagues or by their school principal.

A *Mentorship Coordinator* is hired on a contract basis, to match new teachers with the experienced teachers who volunteer for the program. Mentorship information forms are now included in the new hire packages distributed by the Department of Education at the new teacher orientation workshop that is held annually at the start of each school year. New teachers are informed about the mentoring program and provided with the necessary contact information at this time.

A second Yukon-wide induction initiative is the annual *New Teacher Orientation*, which is a mandatory three day experience for all educators new to teaching or school administration in Yukon. The first day is largely about getting all the necessary paperwork in place: making sure all forms are filled out, computer access is in place, benefits forms signed, passwords set up and various other forms filled out. Following these housekeeping tasks a speaker presents information about recommended practices and exciting initiatives in Yukon. Territorial curriculum consultants for various areas, such as primary or intermediate grade levels, provide information on how new teachers in these areas can access resources and classroom support.

The *Mentorship Coordinator* also attends the New Teacher Orientation and describes the mentorship program at this session, offering an invitation to new teachers to participate.

The purpose of the day is to make new teachers feel situated and to introduce them to helpful resource people with the goal of building relationships with curriculum and technology consultants. The second day of the annual event has been a First Nations cultural experience, where participants might go to a fish camp or to a specific First Nations community to learn about traditions and the importance of different ways of knowing. The third day is focused on instructional strategies in the various subject areas and at the different grade levels. During this day, the new teachers disperse into the area that suits their role.

Another option for mentorship is for new teachers to do visitations to other schools and classrooms as well as to attend workshops relevant to their teaching assignment. In order for school visitations to occur, new teachers need the support of their school principal. All the participants noted that the classroom visitations were a key component to the program.

Our Department of Education has said when that's identified [new teacher interested in participating] the administrators will be on board. Not maybe, or it's up to the administrator whether they participate or not. It's a shall. So that there are no concerns or guilt trip put on the newbie that wants to seek additional support and professional development and all of that. (Personal Communication, YTA representative, May 2012)

Another participant noted that administrators could be better encouraged "to take a more active role in matching teachers in their schools and asking for help for those teachers. I know a lot of them will try to do it themselves, you know but they could access us a little bit more than they do" (Personal Communication, YTA representative, May 2012).

Administrators are invited to meet the new teachers during the orientation, usually during a barbecue held on the last day. One of the participants pointed out that "without administrative support, the new teachers find it very challenging to participate in the mentorship program formally or within their own school" (Personal Communication, YTA representative, May 2012). Administrators have a responsibility to ensure their staff

members, and especially the new teachers in their school are receiving the support and professional development they require to succeed in their careers. The people that I spoke to believed that it was the duty of the principal to identify the resources and expertise inside and outside of their schools and encourage new teachers to connect with these resources.

During the time away from their classrooms, the new teachers will need substitute teachers to fill in for them. There are specific funds budgeted for the mentorship program through the YTA that are separate from the Professional Development fund, although the areas work together. "The funds are managed through the PD office, so any funding that they need, anything that they need for, to run the program it needs to come through this office, through the PD office. So the PD chair has an active role in the program in that way" (Personal Communication, YTA representative, May 2012).

There is also a regular reporting period to the Department of Education about scheduling, as well as requests for specific topics from mentors and mentees. Both organizations are concerned with the success of new teachers and are seeking expertise and resources to support new teachers in their first years of teaching. Representatives of both organizations describe their investment in excellence in education, which is based on the belief that supporting new teachers is crucial to educational excellence.

I asked the decision makers or program planners that I interviewed about what they would like to see in place in Yukon to support new teachers in their first years of teaching. The responses were varied as well as thoughtful and informative. The suggestions ranged from making the program mandatory for all new teachers, to incorporating more visitations to other schools in the program, to seeking more research in the area of teacher retention in Yukon. One participant commented on the idea of making the program mandatory to all new teachers:

I think the program is really good. I'd just like to see it become mandatory for all new teachers. And I would like to see principals encourage experienced teachers to participate and to offer their expertise to new teachers. I'd like to see it be expanded in that way, that it's a part of your first two years of teaching in the Yukon...that that's just expected, and that is all that...if you're involved in the program that is all the PD you do for that first year (Personal Communication, YTA representative, May 2012).

Another suggestion from a participant was to have a follow-up activity to the new teacher orientation where new teachers can come together and talk about how things are going in their classrooms and get some specific in-servicing on an area the group is requesting. "We would do some probably groundwork to see for example, say it was classroom management, and they try to have a work...an in-service...for people that day...a new teacher follow up day."

One of the participants thought it would be valuable to have a study done on the cost of hiring new teachers versus retention, because there does not seem to have been studies of that type done before in Yukon. The same participant also had some ideas on how to make mentorship a priority in Yukon schools:

I think that [mentorship] should be seriously looked at and money put into...more money put into retention through mentorshipthe mentorship coordinator could be a full time position just for mentorship and they're going to all the schools on a regular basis or actually in the classroom with the new teachers. I know that might not be the intention of the program but...just so that there's somebody there that's actually seeing what's happening, and that's touching base on a regular basis and that's what their focus is: the new teachers (Personal Communication, YTA representative, May 2012)

One innovative participant suggested offering a new teacher conference using technology, where the new teachers could log in and ask questions and share stories with the support of a facilitator. This would be especially helpful in rural areas of Yukon where travel is a challenge.

New Teacher Narratives

In speaking with the new teachers, I discovered that their struggles and successes in the first years of teaching were quite similar despite their varied backgrounds and teaching experiences. I also found that all three teachers had many of the same feelings of being overwhelmed and relied on various coping mechanisms to survive the initial periods of uncertainty.

Ella's Story

Ella did not hesitate when I asked her about her learning needs in her first year of teaching and was very open discussing her feelings of being unprepared and overwhelmed with the job. She also spoke about the pressure she felt to be a great teacher and not a disappointment to her students.

The first year of teaching was a very steep learning curve for me. I always considered myself a confident and competent person, but when I stepped in that classroom that kind of disappeared. I think that's what I struggled with the most. I didn't feel confident or assured that I was doing a good job. I spent the first couple of months being genuinely scared. Not of the students at all, but that I wouldn't do a good enough job. I worried that they were missing out on what could have been a great year for them because they got stuck with this rookie teacher who was still trying to figure it all out. I discovered early on that classroom management was a strength of mine and that helped boost my confidence a lot! As far as my needs...I guess what I needed more than anything that year was someone to chat with, a new teacher like me to vent with and bounce ideas off of and to reassure each other that what we were feeling was quite common, because I didn't know that then.

Ella was happy to speak about the highlights in her first year of teaching and her pride in her accomplishments was evident: a smile crept across her face when I asked her to speak about the wonderful experiences she had as a new teacher.

This might sound a bit cheesy, but the highlights during those first years were everyday with the kids. One of the biggest things I learned about myself was how much I enjoyed them. When I was working through my teaching degree, I honestly never thought I would teach young kids. I thought I'd teach high school or even do something else with my degree, but I applied for elementary school teaching jobs and was successful with this one. It turned out that I loved working with young students, and every single day they taught me something new. Some of the other highlights that year were the parents, with the exception of a couple of course (shared laughter). I found most of them to be incredibly supportive and encouraging, especially considering that they had every right to be nervous about their sons and daughters having a new teacher. But they were great. I even had some wonderful compliments from them at the end of the year about how they appreciated my management skills, and how they really sensed a mutual respect between myself and the students that they hadn't always seen in the past with the teachers of their older children.

Ella did hesitate when I asked her to tell me about her biggest challenges in her first year of teaching. New teachers are often feeling as though they have something to prove in their roles and they also lack the job security of their seasoned colleagues. Whitehorse is a small community in the Yukon Territory and there is a fear of being identified by potential employers. As a new teacher myself, I too had some apprehension towards disclosing too much information for fear of being identified. All the participants experienced moments of hesitation during the interviews and I wondered if they were having similar feelings.

Ella spoke to the challenges she faced and the professional resource people she accessed in her first year teaching.

My biggest challenges were, unfortunately, some of the other teachers in the school with the exception of a few who were very supportive and helpful. It was very strange, because I'd never experienced anything like it in any other work environment, but I felt like I was being tested or as though I was part of some kind of unfair initiation. It was uncomfortable actually, and I never really felt accepted or supported by those few colleagues in any way. I really hope that's not a common experience and that other new teachers have had very different experiences in their first years. I actually remember one of my colleagues saying to me at the end of the year when I had made a comment about feeling out of the loop sometimes with processes and procedures that "well, you never asked!" I remember thinking to myself, how could I have known to ask? I mean, you don't know what you don't know right?

I didn't know about classroom visitations at all that year and I never heard of them until my second year of teaching when a guest from the Department of Education came and suggested it to me as a learning tool. My principal did a few scheduled and formal visits into my classroom during that first year for evaluation but didn't just drop in very much. The Department had a new teacher orientation event which I attended but it was one day and it was extremely overwhelming, I would have loved to participate in it during the summer prior to school starting, not when I was already in the first couple of months. I also don't really remember there being a lot of time to chat with the other teachers - it was a lot of presentations and handouts. As far as personal support, I am very lucky. I have an amazing amount of support and

encouragement from my family and friends and I vented with them often [shared laughter]. Sometimes it's nice just to have someone to talk to about it all. I wasn't really looking for answers or advice, just an ear to listen. I relied almost exclusively on my personal supports actually, my family and friends because I could count on them for emotional support. Unfortunately none of them were teachers so they could only listen and be supportive but not relate. Not having anyone really truly understand what it was like as a first year teacher was lonely at times. I would have gladly joined some kind of newbie support group.

I did meet one great person from the Department of Education who visited my room a few times and she was very helpful with resources and ideas. My principal was very kind and I think she was confident in the job I was doing. I didn't get as much feedback as I would have liked, especially positive because she was quick to point out my mistakes or areas for improvement. I think I would have benefitted from some confirmation that at least some of what I was doing was ok. She didn't visit my classroom too often and it was usually scheduled visits when it did happen. I am not a shy person though, so I would often stop into the office and ask questions or elicit feedback on any number of things. We had a weekly school schedule posted that told us of events and activities happening that week which was really helpful. We had regular staff meetings in our school which I actually appreciated as a new teacher, because it was a good chance to hear about what others were doing in their classrooms and upcoming projects or events. Hallway chat was the most common. I would bump into other teachers and my principal and we would have informal chats about how things were going and that was often my opportunity to ask questions. Some of my most helpful conversations happened in the photocopy room waiting on

the machine, because it was a good chance to ask questions to a captive audience, at least until the copier was done!

Ella shared some ideas for how she could have connected with other teachers better, her knowledge of the current mentorship program, and ideas for future new teachers and decision makers.

Increased confidence has certainly helped me since that first year. I would have liked to have more collaborative time set up in our school, encouraged by the principal for us to get together and chat and ask questions. I'm sure I would've come with a list of questions (laughs). I would have liked the opportunity to connect with other first year teachers more, even if just to go for coffee and chat. Maybe YTA could have sent out a welcome email to all of us, or have a monthly tea or something where all new teachers are welcome to attend. That would have been neat. I wasn't aware of any formal mentorship programs when I started teaching and I never took part in one. I know about it now but I've been teaching for a few years already, so I guess that's out now. I would also have liked to see social events for new teachers where we would have the opportunity to chat and share ideas and experiences. Sometimes it's nice just to know you're not alone. Regular check-ins with your principal should be mandatory. I know principals are really busy but I think the teacher-principal relationship is crucial to success in teaching.

Joan's Story

My learning curve was all the way up, very fast! I think a lot of my needs were met although I think having a split grade was a little bit of a struggle in terms of support. The class composition was a little bit of a struggle in the beginning of the year and then there were some changes. Starting the year was my biggest struggle. I

didn't really have the experience or I wasn't properly prepared for how you start a year and it's just so much overwhelming information and then you're always trying to catch up from what you missed in the beginning of the year so the whole year feels like you're trying to catch up.

It's been a wonderful thing to see that the kids have learned, they left happy, they left liking the classroom, feeling good in the classroom, feeling good with their peers, and feeling that they've learnt. That was the feeling I got when they left, so that was a big success.

Some of the highlights of my experience were definitely the relationships with the children. It has been an ongoing battle with myself to see if I was doing the right thing and seeing the connections I made with my students was a major success for me. I had those little moments during the year where I felt that they were learning, especially in the second part of the year. I felt like we really knew each other then and we could get going with things. I also had really great team members around me to help when I needed help, so that was a major highlight.

I found time to be the biggest challenge: time to plan, to get familiar with all the resources, and get to know the curriculum which is just so heavy. I felt all over the place with trying to manage how much time to put into all the paperwork and everything that the school asks, and all these assessments from the government, and all of this combined with planning for my everyday life so school is fun and exciting for the kids was a big challenge.

I went to the first two mentorship events with the YTA and a mentor from my school came with me. That particular person was half time in the school and she taught a different grade level than me. She was always there if I asked for help, but

time was so much an issue that this wasn't the person that helped me the most on a day-to-day basis even though she was always there and I knew she was there. I had other colleagues on the same floor that I connected with more and would discuss my day-to-day questions and concerns with. I found that to be really helpful. The other teachers from the school were a great support, and the vice principal in the school was a really good resource. I went once to a classroom in another school in a split grade to spend a full day which was great, but that was much later in the year and I would have really appreciated it in the beginning of the year instead. The teacher was a friend of mine that was teaching the same grade as me, and I think that was the most insightful experience in my opinion. In the first part of the day she showed me how she organized her classroom and her day, and that really helped.

I definitely did not feel academically prepared for being a new teacher in my first year. I had a bachelor degree before and then I went for a year for teacher's training down south. Academically, we didn't really learn much so really I had to get up to speed with even the simple things. That's just how teachers are taught and you got to do it on your own. Going through all the curriculum was a struggle I had to catch up with pretty fast. It was great to have colleagues I could go to even if I just had a simple question and they were there to let you know.

Emotionally, I found the beginning was really rough, especially with the class composition I had. After the first two months with that class I was exhausted and I was ready to leave the job. And then there were two students that left the classroom and I was able to survive until Christmas. And then at Christmas I decided I was going to stay but I was really ready to leave. The pressure from parents was something I wasn't prepared for at all. I don't know if that was just me starting, not

handling the fact that I wasn't prepared and you have to kind of pretend you know what you're doing even though you don't. That's the pressure I wasn't ready to handle, like not being able to say this was my first year and I'm new to teaching. I think that was hard. There were always people around to answer questions, even if it was just quick answers between two photocopies.

I found other sources of guidance and support outside of the school too. I have a lot of teacher friends in other schools. My mom was a teacher. She had a very different experience but she was able to help a bit. I think mostly you're on your own. When I say you're all alone, I mean after 4:30 when there's no one in the school but, when they were there they were really helpful. You need to know what the help you need is and that's where you get so caught up in so much that you're on your own at ten o'clock in the evening. That's when you need support and you don't have it, and you don't feel like trying to find what it is that you need. I think that's the biggest part. It's a struggle to get it or even to get the time to get it. We had administrators meetings during the year and were always asked for feedback, which is also a lot of work, but I had my evaluations and feedback from that. The principal popped into the classroom to ask if everything was ok. If I really had big trouble, like at the beginning of the year, and I needed their support a lot I had that support. Sometimes it wasn't super effective but I did have it. At the beginning of the year two teachers took on all the new teachers and they did a couple of meetings with us. They told us what was coming up, and things not to worry about and what was going to be big, and where to find information and asked us if we had any questions. We mostly had requests, where we needed some training here and there and they advocated for us to the

administrators so we could get what we needed. So that was great, from them just trying to help and it was very, very appreciated.

I think the idea of having the mentorship program was great because the teacher who is there is paid to be there for your questions, and you don't feel like you're asking so much time of a person that's already so busy. That's what I felt like when I was asking questions in the hallway sometimes, they'd be running for their lives and here I was asking so many questions and wanting to know. So, the idea of the mentorship program where they know it's their role to help you is great. They're not taking it on their time and you don't feel bad about asking.

With the mentorship program, I was assigned a mentor from the school I was teaching at. We looked at the schedule and registered through YTA, and were given the dates of the events. The morning was a little bit of teaching where they would present information and we would be sharing with other teachers and their mentors. In the afternoon we had some time to plan but it was mostly question and answer, with a lot of frantic how do you do this and this (laughs)? I found it helpful to talk to a teacher in the same grade as me because I felt like I wasn't preparing the students and she was reassuring. Unfortunately, we didn't go to the last event because we felt that the morning time was a little bit wasteful where I didn't feel I had the same struggles as the other teachers that were there. It felt like we were just hearing more problems and I'm trying to solve my own little world because it's the first year and you're trying to survive. We did have some collaborative time to look at all the evaluations and talk about stuff and all get on the same page which is good in the same school. Often we didn't even have the same resources from one classroom to the

other and the students get to the next grade and everything is mixed up and you realize no one's on the same page. So, that collaborative time was good.

I found the mentorship program useful because I had that person who is paid to be with you and help you and you feel like you can ask every question you got. So I had my list (laughs)! I am right out of school, and what I learned is right out of school, but what I needed is practical. I should have used that allotted mentorship time in retrospect to go into my mentor's classroom. I would have liked to have the morning in her classroom and the afternoon asking questions. That would have been way more helpful, because I don't need to learn about planning a lesson because I did so much of that in school. What I really needed was ideas on organizing my day, and classroom management for a classroom with real kids who have real issues and behaviours and how you make it all work together. I found the visitations or the time I spent in other classrooms was much more useful.

Planning for a substitute teacher (sub) is so much work in your first year. I found that planning for these events was overwhelming I would suggest a "you don't need to plan day" where you would get a sub from YTA that's doing only that, going around and subbing in classrooms where they are just coming with stuff, and you don't need to plan anything. You can just participate in professional development or classroom visitations for that day and not have to worry about planning for a sub. That's really hard, especially in the beginning of the year when you're new to teaching. I think that would be such a gift.

In terms of support for students with special needs , I felt like the support wasn't helping and things were just getting worse and the kid wasn't happy or in the right place for him or anyone else in the classroom. It was at the point where it was

just dangerous and unpleasant. I had emails from other parents from great kids asking why their child was coming home this year saying they hated school, and that's when I started feeling like I wasn't offering a good environment for these kids. I felt like I was trying to integrate the students with behavioural concerns but it felt like it was at the cost of so many others and it wasn't good for either of them. As a new teacher you just have so much on you, and you are so tired and overwhelmed by all the information from the beginning of the year and plus you have to communicate to parents everything that happens and it was very heavy.

Sally's Story

I feel like my first year of teaching was hitting the ground running. My orientation was someone showing me around the school and what keys worked for what and then saying alright here's your first class you should read these 30 emails, read this agreement and just a tonne of reading that obviously I never got to do because of time. That was the learning. I think I was lucky that I worked in a school with a lot of young staff so they were good at trying to create a support group for emotional stress. Coping mechanisms for day-to-day stuff was helpful, but as far as actual pedagogy and classroom management strategies and stuff like that, I definitely didn't feel like I had a whole lot of help with that.

I feel like I was lucky that I came into a situation where the previous teacher had zero structure or discipline in their class, so it was hard at first to get the kids to buy in to actual activities and structure and consequences and rules, but after a very short time they were happy to have it. I think it just reinforces that kids love rules and they don't need instant gratification all the time like we think they do.

My biggest challenge was report cards. I really felt report cards was making sure every kid has something different on their report card, which seemed completely impossible at the time. Also, it was really hard to set up my systems in the beginning because I had so many students. There were lots of little things I didn't know about, that I learned later after being disciplined for the way I chose to word things. Report cards were the hardest and I struggled with the time management of them. How do you handle it at the end without sleep and not getting anything else done?

The support I got seemed pretty vague to me. I was told that if I ever wanted to go observe in another place that I could, but it's really hard to make contacts at other schools. I had some contacts who were teachers that I had when I was in high school, so I suppose I could have called up one of them and asked if I could come watch their class. I was also told that if there was anything I wanted to just let them know but nothing was set up or offered or an example given, which was difficult. The only PD days I did were the mandatory ones at the beginning of the year because I also didn't even know what was available.

I don't think there are any academics that can prepare you for what teaching is really like. There is no such knowledge base. I think it is all coping mechanisms that can help you. I honestly can't think of what I actually learned in school that transferred to teaching, but it's hard to know because you get this stuff pounded into your head for five years and then you don't know how you know it, it feels like you just do. I think a lot of it was just my own experience and how teachers taught me and I think that I was good at not overreacting to little situations because I realized that most of the time it wasn't life or death until an epi-pen was involved.

If you realize that most of the time everything is fixable when you're a teacher it is really helpful. Yes, your words are very powerful so you have to be careful not to crush a child's hopes and dreams but most of the time if you act calm and reasonable and treat them as though they are capable of being reasonable humans it works. As far as the emotional preparedness, I never really thought that I would be a teacher. I had planned to do some substitute teaching and see if I like it but I was offered my first job after a few days of subbing. I felt like it was a win because I never expected it to happen so it was more like a huge challenge instead of a career choice if that makes any sense. I think that helped me actually, because it's so overwhelming if you think about it too much really. I mean, a whole year of teaching? Even now, if I think about going back to it, I mean I could do it but if I think about everything it entails, I'll barf (laughs). I won't want to do it, because it is so much work and so challenging and you just go home every day beat and tired and discouraged.

There are a lot of positives too, like teaching a whole class how to read...that's amazing. I think it's really easy for teachers to get overwhelmed emotionally and pop culture saying so much all the time about how great we have it doesn't help, like that we have it so good with summers off and stuff. That really bothers me.

In the school, I really feel like it was social events that helped me go to the other teachers about things. It wasn't because I made connections with teachers in the school but more like going for coffee. That was where I felt like I had more support, because you could go there and feel the moral support. If you were having a problem that's where you could bring it out without feeling like a whiner or weak. We had a really great staff room too, because it was school with a lot of young staff, men

and women. It was a very casual approach. I had a close friend who was a teacher in another school who I could talk to which was very helpful. I never really did talk with my teaching friends who I went to school with. That is not to say that everything's great, it is still a struggle. On one level it's great how much freedom we have to create our own structure in class but on the other hand it's crazy because of the difference in teachers. In a school where there's two or three grade 3 teachers and all the parents compare notes on whose teacher is better...that's a lot of crazy pressure.

Outside of school other than my one friend I didn't really have any other people in the teaching profession that I talked to about what was going on in my little world because the only teachers I knew were the ones I worked with. I did feel that it was a cool gang to be a part of which was a good thing, although I honestly sometimes didn't understand the role between the administration and the teachers. The place I found the most guidance and support was with my friend who had completed her teaching degree before me and had more experience teaching. I also took a lot of cues from coaches that I had in the past because there are a lot of similarities between coaching and teaching, just different venues.

I felt like I could have gotten a bit more support from my principal and the vice principal. They were nice, but there was so much pleasing the parents. Like I said earlier, I replaced a teacher who didn't have a lot of structure but the teacher that person was replacing was an amazing teacher that the kids really loved. I definitely felt like I was a second rate as far as being compared to the regular teacher. There was one instance where a parent came to the school because they wanted to confront me because their kid had received a poor grade and they felt their child did not deserve that mark. I was told there would be a meeting, but I did not get

any pre-brief with the teachers that were sitting in (a counsellor, the vice-principal and principal). I felt like maybe we should have had a chat before and we could have all been on the same page. They sided with the parents and then told me after not to worry about it because they were difficult parents. It would have been nice to have more support from administration on my systems and methods. I needed some kind of help to reinforce that.

I think I connected pretty well with the other teachers in my second year. They made it so that we had teams but they separated us by our assignments (the specialists and the classroom teachers) which I think is a pretty big mistake, especially when the classroom teachers were picking classes for the following year. The specialists weren't even involved in the discussion but they knew every kid in the school and could tell you who should be in which rooms and who should not. I think the specialists were kind of seen as extras, maybe not intentionally because they are valued as part of a teaching team. They had school-based teams, but a conversation between a few teachers a couple of afternoons a year is not enough. I don't think that's the best use of a school-based team. We probably could have organized differently and helped other teams more.

I wasn't part of the formal mentorship program, although I'd heard a little talk about it but never saw any documentation about it and didn't know any of the details. I think new teachers really need to see what's going on in other schools. I like the suggestion of one of my colleagues that observing others is a great idea. There could be an afternoon where all the grade one teachers in Whitehorse get together and share ideas and all the successes they had in their first year, and maybe

share things that didn't work so well. It seems like there is a huge difference between schools.

I have heard people say not to apply at certain schools because nobody wants to work there, or that this other school is the best school to work at and I found it really sad how quickly those kinds of statements can spread. We all know that the principal can have a big influence on that. Success breeds success, so if a school is the cool place to go then everyone wants to go there and they're going to get more people applying and more passionate people that persevere and so on. I mean, some people that are on their way out have a lot to share but don't have the passion to share it anymore.

Teachers have their own approaches, but those differences really help you appreciate your own abilities too because there is no one way to do it. I think that's the problem too, so many teachers are trying to be perfectionists and burn themselves out for that extra however many hours week, and what do you get out of it? How much more does your classroom really benefit from it? I don't know...I think there's a point where you have to say enough is enough. You have to say that the students are going to learn what they need to learn even if this might not be the prettiest handout that they could get, maybe I could have found a better image on this and so on. You don't want to be detached from it, but just to recognize how much energy you should be putting in.

I would have liked to have a workshop on classroom routines. One thing I did get to see in that first year was a lot of different classrooms and see what they were doing which was great. It was different than just looking at the walls and seeing how they break up their day, which doesn't really tell you a whole lot. It would be really

cool to have conversations with the other teachers about why they break up their day the way they do, or why they do a specific activity after lunch and not before. As a new teacher, I would have found that really helpful.

I definitely did not feel I had enough support for students with special needs. I'd say that's the biggest problem, aside from class size, which everyone always complains about. I felt like we often label children as being one thing or another and then they're stuck with that their whole school career. On the other hand, how bad does it have to get before some students get the help they need? There's definitely not enough support to individualize everyone's learning, which would be ideal. I feel like discipline problems can often be fixed if they just get that one-on-one attention. More adults in the building makes a big difference, too. Obviously more staff would be great but if we could get parent volunteers to just come in and give some kids that attention I think that could be a big solution.

I don't have a lot of teaching experience but I feel like it's a burnout profession. The reason I am not teaching right now is that I don't want to just be counting the days until summer every year, like so many teachers do. I think the years can fly by so fast when all you're trying to do is get from one report card pile to the next. Maybe the answer is not just teacher support but to look at the whole education system. Maybe we need to look at these schools that do six weeks on and two weeks off. Maybe that will give teachers a whole lot more energy and bring capacity to deal with struggles. There's a lot to be said for teacher support but also setting people up for success instead of failure. I mean, how much extra teaching do you have to do? And how much extra discipline do you have to do when the first two

weeks of school are boot camp for how we walk down the hall again? I really don't know that the summer off is the best thing.

New Teachers' Needs

The framework of classroom readiness, emotional needs, and relationship needs that I used to sort the literature on new teachers' needs is also useful for considering the needs expressed by my three new teacher participants. All three participants spoke of feeling unprepared and inadequate in the classroom. Intense anxiety over their performance led to emotional stress, compounded by exhaustion. Their situations led them to find coping mechanisms within themselves or to seek out supportive relationships with varying degrees of success.

Classroom Performance

The participants varied in their responses to the question about whether they felt academically and emotionally prepared for teaching. Sally described her experience as "hit the ground running". She also suggested that there are no academics that can prepare teachers for the first year. When I asked about their learning, needs, struggles and successes in their first years of teaching, the novice teachers told me similar stories of feeling overwhelmed and they also shared a lack of confidence about their performances. Ella shared her feelings of uncertainty:

I think that's what I struggled with the most. I didn't feel confident or assured that I was doing a good job. I spent the first couple of months being genuinely scared. Not of the students at all, but that I wouldn't do a good enough job. I worried they were missing out on what could have been a great year for them because they got stuck with this rookie teacher who was still trying to figure it all out (Ella, May, 2012)

The other participants had similar experiences. Joan shared her struggles with beginning her first teaching year.

I think starting the year was the biggest struggle because I didn't really have the...either the experience or I didn't get taught how you start a year and it's just overwhelming information so...that's been the biggest...and then you're always trying to catch up from what you missed in the beginning of the year so the whole year feels like you're trying to catch up. (Joan, May, 2012)

Sally was pleased to discover that classroom management was an area of strength for her but she would have appreciated a workshop on classroom routines and organizing the day. Like Joan, Sally expressed dissatisfaction with her teacher education program. She was afraid of appearing incompetent if she asked for help from administrators and she would have welcomed feedback on pedagogy, management systems, and teaching methods.

Sally struggled with time management, exhaustion, and stress throughout her first year of teaching but her biggest challenge was the extra work and energy required when preparing report cards. She felt that she had little guidance for this task in advance but she was "disciplined" for some of the wording that she had used when the report cards were completed. This negative evaluation of her work by the principal seemed to add to her stress. Sally was further troubled by the discrepancy between her own exhaustion and the public perception that teaching is an easy job.

I added a question to the interview at the request of a superintendent at the Yukon Department of Education: *Did you feel there was enough support for students with special needs?* Although Ella, Joan and Sally had different assignments in their first year, they all agreed that they did not have enough support for students with special needs. Sally felt there is "definitely not enough support to individualize everyone's learning... I feel like discipline problems can often be fixed if they just get that one-on-one attention. More adults in the building makes a big difference too, obviously more staff would be great" (Sally, May 2012).

Joan was challenged, beyond the usual classroom management issues, by the behaviours of two special needs students. She believed that the integration of these students in the regular classroom came at a cost to the other students.

The feelings of intense anxiety about classroom performance that these teachers shared are not unusual. Moir (1999) described the phases of a teacher's first year as *anticipation, survival, disillusionment, rejuvenation, and reflection*. The anticipation phase is before the school year begins and leads right into the survival phase that Sally, Joan, and Ella all spoke of several times. Moir (1999) described this phase as overwhelming for new teachers. During the survival phase, most new teachers struggle to keep their heads above water. Joan confirmed her feelings of self-doubt and isolation: "I don't know if that was just me starting, not handling the fact that I wasn't prepared and you have to kind of pretend you know what you're doing even though you don't." (Joan, May 2012)

Emotional Needs

It was clear in these three narratives from new teachers that their emotional needs in the first years of teaching were directly related to their perception of their own classroom readiness, or teaching efficacy, compounded by exhaustion. Isolation was a common concern. Ella wished that she could have shared her experiences with other new teachers, to know that what she was experiencing was common. Joan remarked on how alone she felt as she worked long after-school hours on her planning and marking and there was no one available to talk to. Sally described how she drew on personal coping mechanisms to deal with the stress of teaching, including interacting with a young staff who provided emotional support but little in the way of advice specific to teaching.

Relationship Needs

A challenge for Sally was the sense that she was competing with other teachers in the eyes of her students' parents. Ella reported not feeling accepted by some of the other teachers, who treated her as though she was being tested. Joan, however, was grateful for a community of support among colleagues who were "really great team members." As in the Canada-wide Karsenti and Collins (2013) study, participants in this study would have appreciated more opportunities for effective collaboration with colleagues, although Joan noted how difficult it was to find the time for it.

All participants drew emotional strength from their relationships outside of school and Joan and Sally, particularly, identified their relationships with students as providing encouragement. Ella enjoyed the benefit of supportive relationships with parents who gave her positive feedback, although Sally experienced pressure from parents as a challenge. Relationships with friends or relatives who were teachers became significant as informal mentoring, in that the support provided may have had an impact on classroom performance. The teachers in this study described experiences consistent with the literature, in that they looked for and appreciated relationships that helped to meet emotional needs emerging from anxiety about classroom performance.

Support Through Mentoring

The mentoring literature identifies *formal mentoring* programs, which are structures set up by the employer, and distinguishes them from the *informal mentoring* that occurs when new teachers find their own support from colleagues, relatives, or friends. The literature differs on which form is most effective. Some sources maintain that mentoring is too important to be left to chance. Mentorship is a crucial element to the lives of new teachers in creating a community atmosphere as stated by Heller (2004) who goes on to say that all new

teachers need a critical friend, and that is the mentor. In their investigation of mentoring practices, Parker, Ndove, and Imig (2009) found that informal mentoring, such as meeting outside of the school day, having discussions, and planning the day together had more positive impact on new teachers' desire to stay in the profession. They found formal mentorship activities, such as support with student discipline, working with students, and functioning within the school district, to be of lesser value to the new teachers in their study.

Formal Mentorship

Of the three participants interviewed, Joan was the only teacher who had been involved in the formal teacher mentorship program sponsored by the Yukon Department of Education and YTA. She did not volunteer but the program was suggested to her by her principal and her mentor was in the same school. She expressed an appreciation for being involved in the program:

I think the idea of having the mentorship program was great because the teacher who is there is paid to be there for your questions and you don't feel like you're asking so much time of a person that's already so busy. That's what I felt like when I was asking questions in the hallway sometimes, they'd be running for their lives and here you are asking so many questions. (Joan, May 2012)

Joan commented that asking for help of her mentor was easier than asking for help from other colleagues because she was so conscious of the time answering her questions would take from their busy days. However, Joan and her mentor only attended two mentorship events together and their communication at school seemed to become less frequent over time. Although she did not explain, the literature suggests that mentors may not be effective if they are not working in the same subject area or grade level or if they have not had specific mentorship training. When mentorship consists of answering the new teacher's questions, it may be more responsive to the specific needs of each new teacher. However, it may also be limited when new teachers do not know what to ask.

Although the Yukon mentorship program is promoted at orientation sessions for new teachers, Ella revealed that she had no awareness of an ongoing mentorship program when she was a new teacher. She remembered attending a one day orientation session that was overwhelming and consisted of passing out paperwork. Looking back, she had wished for time for interaction with the other new teachers there. Although Sally may have been aware of the mentorship program, she did not take advantage of the opportunity. She remembered wondering how it might benefit her and what it included. Sally commented that she just did not realize how much she was going to need to know as a new teacher.

Visitations

Joan also took part in a visitation, which was funded by YTA and could be considered part of an overall induction program. Visitations allow teachers to visit a classroom in another school for a day. Because she was teaching two grades and the teacher she visited also had a split grade classroom, Joan found the visitation valuable, although she wished it had occurred earlier in the school year. Joan knew the teacher she planned to visit, which facilitated her access to this form of support. Ella did not know about visitations. Sally had been told about visitations but without her own contacts, she did not know where to begin to access this opportunity for support.

Support from the Principal.

Ella's interaction with her principal was, for the most part, limited to formal evaluation observations that emphasized her weaknesses but offered little encouragement. Joan spoke of a community of supportive colleagues that included her vice-principal. Sally remembered her introduction to the school as receiving her keys and being directed to read a volume of emails, which she did not find time to do. Sally did not describe a formal evaluation process with her administrator but she did say that she did not understand the

administrator's role. For example, she had no briefing prior to a parent meeting, at which the administrator seemed to side with the parents but afterward told her not to worry about their concerns. Sadly, there seem to have been lost opportunities for the administrator to support Sally as part of their routine interactions.

Informal Mentorship

Although Joan appreciated designated time for formal mentorship, she also identified other, less formal interactions as helpful. The decision not to attend the last of three group sessions with her mentor came from Joan's perception that the previous session had not addressed her specific needs. She appreciated "really great team members," including other teachers and her vice-principal, who responded to specific requests. This community of support included the school's vice-principal.

I was most intrigued by the ways the new teachers found support outside of their schools. Joan reached out to friends and family who were teachers. Sally spoke about some of the personal connections she made, "I had a close friend who was a teacher in another school who I could talk to which was very helpful." All the new teachers mentioned the importance of talking to someone who could relate to their experience. Ella emphasized the importance of personal connections as a support system; however she felt isolated in her experiences as a novice teacher,

Mostly I relied on my personal supports, my family and friends. Unfortunately none of them were teachers so they could only listen and be supportive but not relate...I didn't really have anyone to relate to. I could of course count on my family for emotional support but not having anyone really truly understand what it was like as a first year teacher was lonely at times. I would have gladly joined some kind of newbie support group *shared laughter*. (Personal Communication, Ella, May 2012)

Suggestions for Yukon Mentoring Programs

The new teachers who told me their stories were not hesitant to say what they would like to see in place to support new teachers in Yukon. As people who have lived the experience, they offered valuable insights and ideas. Joan commented on the time-consuming task of preparing for a substitute teacher. She suggested there be a pool of substitute teachers who could offer a day that did not require planning by the classroom teacher. She suggested that “You get a sub from YTA that’s doing only that, going around and subbing in classrooms where they are just coming with stuff, and you don’t need to plan” (Joan, May 2012). Sally suggested there be more observation visitations with other schools and in other classrooms. She also liked the idea of a full afternoon where all the Whitehorse teachers at a given grade level get together and share ideas. Ella also mentioned the idea of a less formal collaborative day. “I would like to see social events for new teachers where they would have the opportunity to chat and share ideas and experiences...sometimes it’s nice just to know you’re not alone” (Ella, May 2012).

Suggestions to Improve Mentoring

The new teachers who participated in this study shared a wealth of information. From their stories and the literature on mentorship and induction programs, I have compiled some suggestions for teacher educators and new teachers themselves, school district program planners, principals, and other experienced teachers who may become formal or informal mentors. Although this study focused on the experiences of only a few individuals and cannot be generalized to a larger group of new teachers, the kinds of experiences Yukon participants described are common in the literature on new teachers in North America. As more effective mentorship programs are established, the experiences of new teachers may become less painful, with positive results for retention.

Teacher Educators and New Teachers

Although the teachers I interviewed experienced many successes in their first years of teaching, the prevalent themes in their stories were about feeling overwhelmed, exhausted, and alone. It would be helpful for education students to know, before they accept their first position as a teacher, that these feelings are common. New teachers might be better prepared to cope if they are already familiar with Moir's (1999) stages of the first year of teaching and are prepared to identify these stages in their own experience, with a hopeful focus on moving beyond the survival stage. Education students may also benefit from explicit teaching about coping mechanisms (Hemmings & Hockley, 2001) to help them survive the initial periods of uncertainty, especially those times when effective mentors are not available. With this knowledge, new teachers might understand the importance of seizing opportunities for mentorship when they are offered and of building their own supportive networks when a formal mentoring program is not available.

Yukon Mentorship Program

The experiences of these few participants reveal the value of continuing and perhaps enhancing the Yukon mentorship program. The program was an important part of overall induction for Joan that included a classroom visitation, attention from her vice-principal, and collaboration with other colleagues. Joan was the only one of the three participants who participated in the program, but it may have been quite beneficial for Ella and Sally as well, had they been made aware of the opportunity and how important it could be to them. Mandating the program for all new teachers in Yukon would reach those who might be viewing the mentorship package as just another form in an already mounting pile of paperwork.

Enhancements to an expanded, compulsory program could include events to link new teachers to each other for social or professional peer support, perhaps by electronic means if travel costs from rural communities are prohibitive. Expanding the Mentorship Coordinator's role from part-time to full-time could be a relatively cost-effective way to facilitate leadership for mentorship events as well as increase attention to matching mentors and new teachers, providing mentors with training, and monitoring feedback from mentors and new teachers to ensure that group sessions are seen as a productive use of time. It may be useful for the person in this role to collect data on attrition rates as compared with recruiting costs, to evaluate the program's ongoing effectiveness. However, like the study of new teacher concerns conducted by McCann, Johannesen, and Ricca (2005), the stories brought to light in this study are a testament to the power of local narratives to bring about change.

In selecting and training mentors, it is important to match grade level or subject area, so that the mentor can provide instructional support as well as emotional support and encouragement. Although emotional support may be needed when a new teacher is overwhelmed and exhausted, effective mentors will help to address classroom issues before they cause such intense responses. Perhaps a lesson can be learned from the mentorship program in Shanghai (Jensen, 2013), where mentors are seen as master teachers. Although there is no structure in Yukon to promote master teachers to senior positions as they are in Shanghai, it may be possible to offer additional professional development funds to teachers who contribute their time and expertise to the mentoring program.

In addition, it may be important not to overlook younger mentors who are relatively new to the profession themselves and with whom beginners may relate to more easily. Hall and Simeral (2008) stated that when we think of peer relations, we think of people who are of equal rank and work in similar positions. Teachers coaching each other meet this definition;

they share the same work. Neither wields power over the other. All three participants in this study desired social and professional connections with other teachers. Learning from peers allows mentor and mentee to eliminate the issue of superiority or being unable to relate.

Principals and Vice-Principals

This study and the stories of new teachers found in the literature emphasize the role that can be played by school administrators as mentors, particularly during that first year. Although new teachers may be wary of administrators because of their fear of negative evaluations, they are hungry for feedback that affirms their successes as well as pointing out areas to improve and helping to set manageable goals. When combined with frequent informal interactions that build confidence and trust, the evaluation process can be oriented to learning.

Learning Communities

An encouraging trend emerging in the literature is the support provided within groups of teachers mentoring each other as they collaborate in Professional Learning Communities (Dufour & Eaker, 1998) to improve instruction. Sally found some support as part of a collaborative team, although she commented that the time could have been used more effectively. As principals learn to structure and support more effective teams (Marzano & Dufour, 2006), opportunities for mentorship within them may improve. An emerging ideal in the mentorship field may be interdependent learning communities providing collaboration that helps teachers at any stage of their careers improve on their skills and confidence.

Suggestions for Further Research

In Yukon, a wider study of the experiences of a greater number of new teachers, both in Whitehorse and in the outlying communities, could provide a strong rationale for continuing and refining the Yukon Mentorship Program. A mixed methods study, with a

questionnaire and follow-up interviews, could provide generalizable results about the effectiveness of mentorship and new directions for decision makers and program planners to be taken. However, for many teachers and school administrators, the voices of specific local individuals describing their experiences may be the most compelling impetus for change. This study has contributed to an ongoing conversation that has great value for educational systems everywhere and especially in northern areas where attrition is high.

Conclusion

Recognizing the value of the mentorship experience for the mentor should not be overlooked, because teaching others is the best way to learn a skill. Mentorship is critical to all professions and is the foundation to building professional confidence, success and longevity in one's career. As I reflect back on my experiences as a new teacher, I am regretful that I did not seek out mentors in the experienced teachers within my school as well as reaching out to mentor teachers in other schools. As a young and overwhelmed new teacher, I was unaware of the potential learning that could have taken place in seeking out a variety of mentorship opportunities. The passing of time has allowed me to recognize that it was my fear of appearing incompetent that built an impenetrable barrier to potential learning from the more experienced teachers in my school. Winston Churchill spoke of that all-encompassing fear of failure when he said, "Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts." Fresh out of University and new to the profession, I did not view failure as an option and to do so would have been unimaginable. It was my absolute goal to be completely competent and require no support from anyone to excel at my job which seems an absurdity upon reflection. In the years since I left the profession, I have often wondered if I had been more proactive in seizing mentorship opportunities and less afraid of failure if I would still be teaching today.

References

- Alberta Teachers' Association (n.d). *Mentoring beginning teachers: Program handbook*. Retrieved:
http://www.teachers.ab.ca/SiteCollectionDocuments/ATA/Publications/Professional-Development/Mentoring_Beginning_Teachers.pdf
- Andrews, B. D., & Quinn, R. J. (2005). The effects of mentoring on first-year teachers' perceptions of support received. *Clearing House*, 78(3), p. 110-116.
- Boe, E., Bobitt, S., & Cook, L. (1993). *Whither didst thou go? Retention, reassignment, migration, and attrition of special and general education teachers in national perspectives*. San Antonio: Annual Convention of the Council for Exceptional Children.
- Brighton, C.M. (1999). Keeping good teachers: Lessons from Novices. *A Better Beginning Supporting and Mentoring New Teachers*. Virginia: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Cherian, F., & Daniel, Y. (2008). Principal Leadership in New Teacher Induction: Becoming Agents of Change. *International Journal of Education Policy and Leadership*, 3(2), 1-11.
- Cresswell, J. W. (2007) *Qualitative inquiry & research design choosing among five approaches*. CA: Sage.
- Croasmun, J., Hampton, D., and Hermann, S. (1997). Teacher attrition: Is time running out? *Issues challenging education*. [online]. Retrieved:
<http://horizon.unc.edu/projects/issues/papers/Hampton.asp>
- Dufour, R., & Eaker, R. (1998). *Professional learning communities at work: Best practices for enhancing student achievement*. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press.
- Dufour, R., & Marzano, R. (2011). *Leaders of learning: How district, school, and classroom leaders improve student achievement*. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press.
- Gilbert, L. (2005). What helps beginning teachers? *Educational Leadership* 62(8), p. 36 – 39.
- Hall, G. (1992). Induction: The missing link. *Journal of Teacher Education*. 33(3), p. 53-55.
- Hall, P. & Simeral, A. (2008). *Building teachers' capacity for success: A collaborative approach for coaches and school leaders*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- Heller, D.A. (2004). *Teachers wanted: Attracting and retaining good teachers*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- Hellsten, L., Prytula, M., Ebanks, A., & Lai, H. (2009). Teacher induction: Exploring

- beginning teacher mentorship. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 1-31.
- Hockley, T., & Hemmings, B. (2001) *A rural-based teacher education internship: Stressors and coping mechanisms*. ED470622 Retrieved: <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED470622.pdf>.
- Hoerr, T. (2005). Meeting new teachers' personal needs. *Educational Leadership* 62(8), p. 82 – 84.
- Howe, E. R. (2006). Exemplary teacher induction: An international review. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 38(3), pp. 287-297.
- Illinois Education Association. (2009, October 7). *New Teacher Induction and Mentoring Program*. [online, YouTube] Retrieved: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9prs2_jt1UE
- Ingersoll, R. & Smith, T. (2003). The wrong solution to the teacher shortage. *Educational Leadership* 60(8), p. 30 – 33. Retrieved: http://www.gse.upenn.edu/pdf/rmi/EL_TheWrongSolution_to_theTeacherShortage.pdf
- Jensen, B. (2013). A new way to help teachers. *Phi Delta Kappan*, April. p. 76 – 77.
- Joseph, D., & Burney, S. (2011). Early career teaching: Learning to be a teacher and staying on the job. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education* (36)9. Retrieved: <http://ro.ecu.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1589&context=ajte>
- Karsenti, T., & Collin, S. (2013). Why are new teachers leaving the profession? Results of a Canada-wide survey. *Education* 3(3), p. 141 – 149. DOI: 10.5923/j.edu.20130303.01
- Looney, J. (1997). Mentoring the Beginning Teacher: A Study of Influencing Variables. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Eastern Education Research Association, Hilton Head, S.C., February. ERIC ED 346 042.
- Marshall, C., & Rossman, G.B. (1995). *Designing Qualitative Research*. California: SAGE Publications.
- McCann, T., Johannessen, L., & Ricca, B. (2005). Responding to new teachers' concerns. *Educational Leadership* 62(8), p. 30 – 34.
- Moir, E. (1999). The stages of a teacher's first year. In Sherer, M. (Ed). *Better beginnings: supporting and mentoring new teachers*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD. pp. 19-23.
- Moir, E. (1990/2011). Phases of first year teaching. New Teacher Center. [online]. Retrieved: <http://www.newteachercenter.org/blog/phases-first-year-teaching>.

- New Teacher Center. (2009). [online, You Tube]. Retrieved:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ykxkt3Eq7ao>
- NWT Department of Education, Culture and Employment, (2008). *NWT Teacher Induction*. Retrieved March 17, 2011 from <http://www.newteachersnwt.ca/index.html>
- Onwuegbuzie, A., & Leech, N. (2006). Linking research questions to mixed methods data analysis procedures. *The Qualitative Report* 11(3) p. 474-498. Retrieved:
<http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR11-3/onwuegbuzie.pdf>
- Parker, M. A., Ndoye, A., & Imig, S. R. (2009). Keeping our teachers! Investigating mentoring practices to support and retain novice educators. *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning*, 17(4), 329-341. doi:10.1080/13611260903391500
- Patterson, M. (2005). Hazed! *Educational Leadership* 62(8), p. 20 – 23.
- Riggs, L. (2013) Why do teachers quit? And why do they stay? *The Atlantic*. Retrieved:
<http://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2013/10/why-do-teachers-quit/280699/>
- Scherer, M. (2003). *Keeping good teachers*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- Shakrani, S. (2008). *Costly Crisis, Solvable Problem*. Michigan: Michigan State University.
- Stotsky, S. (2006). Who should be accountable for what beginning teachers need to know? *Journal of Leadership for Effective & Equitable Organizations*, p. 609-629.
- Useem, E., & Neild, C. (2005). Supporting new teachers in the city. *Educational Leadership* 62(8), p. 44 – 47.
- Wayne, A., Youngs, P., & Fleischman, S. (2005). Improving teacher induction. *Educational Leadership* 62(8), p.76 – 77.

Appendix A

Interview Questions

Part One – Questions for Teacher Participants

1. Based on your experience, please tell me about your learning, your needs, your struggles, and your successes in your first years of teaching.

what were the highlights of your experiences?

what were your biggest challenges?

2. Tell me about the support you received in your first years of teaching.

classroom visitations

YTA.

personal support

3. In your experience, did you feel academically and emotionally prepared for your role as a new teacher?

4. Did you feel there was anyone you could go to and ask questions of?

in the school

outside of the school

5. Where did you find sources of guidance and support outside of the school environment?

6. Did you receive support from administrators?

classroom visits

regular meetings

informal hallway chat

7. What has (or would have) helped you connect with other teachers?

8. Did you take part in a formal mentorship program? Are you aware of any formal or informal mentorship programs or initiatives in place for new teachers in the Yukon?

what did that look like?

did you find it useful and helpful?

9. What would you like to see in place in Yukon to support new teachers in their first years of teaching?
10. In your experience, did you feel you had enough support for students with special needs?

Part Two – Questions for Decision Makers

1. Tell me about your current role in the organization you work for. How does this role and the decisions you make impact the lives of new teachers in Yukon?
2. Do you believe teacher retention, possibly through mentorship, is an important local need for Whitehorse? For the rural communities?
3. What can you share about the history of new teacher mentorship or induction programs in the Yukon? What has been tried? What is the current approach? What has been most successful?
4. Can you comment on the role of administrators in new teacher mentorship or induction? What about the role of curriculum consultants from the Department of Education? What about YTA, particularly the Professional Development Committee or Chair?
5. What would you like to see in place in Yukon to support new teachers in their first years of teaching?

Appendix B

The Lived Experience of Mentorship for Novice Yukon Teachers

Information Letter and Informed Consent

(for your participation in a study to share mentorship experiences of new teachers)

Researcher: Orlanna Aubichon, UNBC Masters of Education, Project

This study will explore the formal and informal mentorship experiences of new teachers in the Yukon Territory. The purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of what those experiences have been. I am asking you to participate in this study because you are a teacher with fewer than three years of teaching experience in a Whitehorse school. Your personal perspectives, experiences and insights will help myself and decision makers learn if formal mentorship programs in the Yukon Territory are accessible or effective, and how they can be developed or enhanced to improve mentorship experiences for new teachers. Based on findings from your experiences and perspectives, new teachers may also be alerted to the need to build their support networks and guide more experienced teachers who may be willing to help provide that support.

What are we asking you to do?

Read this Information Letter carefully, and if you are willing to participate in the study, copy and paste the consent statement in an email to Orlanna Aubichon (aubich0@unbc.ca).

At the top of your email, write a short, clear sentence saying that you have read the information letter, that you wish to participate in the study, and that you give your permission to be interviewed for this study. The interview will be arranged at a time and place convenient for you, it will take up to an hour, and it will be recorded on a digital voice recorder.

Who will have access to your data?

Interviews will be transcribed by me and data will be integrated from the digital recordings into the written document. Because the interviews will not be transcribed, access to the data with names attached will be limited to Orlanna Aubichon. Access to the data with all identifying information removed will be limited to myself and to Dr. Willow Brown, my university supervisor.

Participation in this Study is Voluntary

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may decline the invitation to participate. If you choose to participate, you may withdraw from the study at any time. If you withdraw, all of the data you have contributed will be destroyed and will not appear in the final project.

Potential Benefits and Risks

I do not anticipate that there will be any risks that come about as a result of participation in this study. Your participation in this study will benefit other new teachers and decision

makers within the Yukon Department of Education. You will have the satisfaction of knowing that you were involved in a project which will share the mentorship experiences of new teachers in Yukon.

Anonymity and Confidentiality

Although anonymity cannot be guaranteed, as a researcher my processes have been developed to protect your identity as much as possible. These processes include limiting access of digitally recorded interviews to only Orlanna Aubichon and Dr. Willow Brown. Individual names will not be used in any presentations or articles that I prepare to share the study. Confidentiality is important because I will learn the most from your honest responses. Because your responses will be kept confidential, they will not pose any risk to you as a teacher. All narratives will be presented using pseudonyms or an alias so that participant stories and experiences can be shared freely.

Information Storage

All information from this study will be stored on a password and facial recognition protected computer. All data will be deleted or shredded on September 30, 2012. The only remaining material after this time will be presentations and/or papers that relate to the project but do not contain identifying information. No other use of digital voice recordings will be made.

Questions or Concerns About this Study

If you have questions about this study, please contact the researcher, Orlanna Aubichon at 867 334-1380 or by email at aubich0@unbc.ca. You may also contact my supervisor, Dr. Willow Brown by email at brown@unbc.ca. If you have concerns or complaints, you are encouraged to contact the UNBC Office of Research at reb@unbc.ca or 250 960-6735.

How do you get a copy of the results?

An executive summary of the study will be shared with each participant upon completion of the project. You will also be contacted prior to the final report to ensure that your narratives are stated accurately and that you feel that your story has been appropriately represented.

Consent

I agree to participate in the New Teacher Mentorship study as described on this Information Letter. I understand that anonymity cannot be guaranteed, but that the researcher's processes have been developed to protect my identity as much as possible. My interview will be recorded on a digital voice recorder and only the researcher will have access to identifying information. As a participant, I understand my rights and the risks outlined in this information letter.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Printed Name: _____

You will receive a copy of this form for your records and the original will be kept by the researcher as evidence of your consent to participate.